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**Transforming Music Criticism? An Examination of Changes in Music
Journalism in the English Broadsheet Press from 1981 to 1991.**

Jennifer Skellington

Oxford Brookes University

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 2010

Volume 1 of 3

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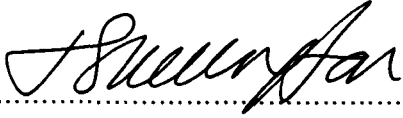
Abstract

To date, very little academic attention has been awarded specifically to English broadsheet music writing and of the few texts which do touch upon this area many have relied upon the anecdotal accounts of only a handful of authors. As such, this research was undertaken to provide new insights into this relatively untouched area, concentrating particularly upon the period 1981 to 1991 during which, it was anticipated, a number of fundamental changes might be observed. The research triangulates findings from three sources; firstly, quantitative analysis is drawn from a large database constructed for the purposes of this study, which details the music-related content of 744 sample broadsheet publications, to reveal a series of shifts in the nature of broadsheet music coverage during the period under review. A detailed qualitative analysis of 38 sample broadsheet music reviews then highlights differences in the critical styles adopted by broadsheet music writers across and within the spectrum of music genres and time period examined. Secondly, insights into the nature of change within broadsheet music coverage between 1981 and 1991 are presented from the perspectives of thirteen broadsheet music writers themselves, resulting from interviews conducted specifically for this research. Finally, the research findings are placed within a suggested literary and conceptual framework through reference to a range of secondary sources.

In considering the motives for change, particular attention is devoted to the Thatcher government, whose free market policies fuelled an increase in music marketing and whose reduction of trade union powers resulted in the Wapping Dispute of 1986 and the subsequent upheaval of broadsheet production practices. Consideration is also given to both the impact of emergent and discontinued contemporary publications, with particular attention awarded to *The Independent* newspaper, and to shifting editorial attitudes - the latter of which, it is suggested here, led to a destabilisation of the traditional genre hierarchy. The thesis also examines the employment conditions of broadsheet music journalists during the period under review in order to understand how their recruitment, training, reward and working relationships may have affected their critical output. Finally, a brief examination of a sample of broadsheets from 2009 suggests that the editorial mindset inherited from the latter 1980s has possibly deepened, if not become entrenched, in twenty first century broadsheet production practices. The thesis, by virtue of the original evidence gathered here, argues that a significant dynamic of change within broadsheet music coverage was indeed in place during the period 1981 to 1991 and that, given its possible implications for music audiences, further scholarly examination of this subject is imperative.

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other education institution. The research contained within this thesis was gathered by the author in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford Brookes University, and was conducted between 2004 and 2010. All sources to the best of my knowledge have been fully credited.

Signed: 

Date:1st June 2010.....

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My journey towards the completion of this thesis has provided me with many privileged experiences, of which the opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with the broadsheet music critics who participated in this work was undoubtedly the highpoint. Heartfelt thanks go to each of the journalists who sacrificed their valuable time, and who often welcomed me into their workplaces and homes, and for their patience and good humour during the interviews. In remembrance also of Richard Cook and Robert Sandall, I hope that this thesis will help their work to live on.

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I dedicate this piece of work to my two wonderful sons, Ptolemy and Theodore.

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Glossary of Key Terms & Abbreviations

Listed below is a glossary of key terms and abbreviations used within this thesis. The definitions included within it were arrived at after consulting a range of sources, typically between two and eight, and then citing the most appropriate, or by generating a summary definition based upon elements of those sources which most accurately reflected the intended meaning of the term as used within the context of this thesis.

Advert	A “notice which shows that something is for sale or that a service is offered”. ¹ In this thesis adverts have been distinguished from event guides (see below) by their appearance, since they are often accompanied by pictures, contained within a box shaped area and comprise text that is of a different format and appearance to that used in the main body of the publication.
Band	Whilst this term can refer to a range of instrumental ensembles, including brass bands, wind bands and military bands, ² in this thesis it has been treated almost exclusively as synonymous with the term ‘group’, as per the lay definition of the term used in popular culture, usually but not exclusively associated with rock and pop genres.
Broadsheet	A large-format newspaper, generally considered to be of a high cultural standard whose style and values espouse a more serious, authoritative and intelligent read than their tabloid counterparts (see ‘Tabloid’ below). ³
Chamber (music)	Referring to “music written for small instrumental ensemble, with one player to a part, and intended for performance either in private, in a domestic environment with or without listeners, or in public in a small concert hall before an audience of limited size”. ⁴ To maintain consistency in this thesis,

¹ Collin, Peter: *Dictionary of Printing and Publishing*, p. 7.

² As discussed by Polk, Keith et al.: “Band”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 622.

³ During the period 1981 to 1991 the term broadsheet, in England, would have been synonymous with the larger format newspapers *The Guardian*, *Telegraph*, *Financial Times*, *Independent* and *Times*, although their collective identity as such has become somewhat blurred since the more recent launch of the tabloid sized versions of the latter two, introduced on 30th September and 26th November 2003 respectively, and the ‘Berliner’ sized format of *The Guardian* since 12th September 2005. Broadsheets were often considered to act as the ‘quality press’, defined as “newspapers and magazines aiming at a high level of readership”, as in Collin, Peter: *The Dictionary of Printing and Publishing*, p. 241, or singularly as a ‘quality newspaper’, defined as “a newspaper considered to be of a high cultural standard”, as in Trumble, William: *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* p. 2427.

music for chamber choir has been recorded as 'choral' and music for chamber orchestra has been recorded as 'orchestral'.

Choral	A performance mode whereby music is performed by a choir, i.e. a "group of singers who perform together either in unison or, much more usually, in parts", ⁵ and in this thesis excludes music written for chorus in connection with an opera, musical or other similar production.
Classical (music)	The difficulties in defining this term are well documented. ⁶ In this thesis, the genre 'classical' applies to music which was written approximately <i>more</i> than two decades earlier than the date of the newspaper publication in which the reference appears, which may fulfil some or all of the attributes of quality and excellence often associated with the classical tradition, and where the music does not obviously belong to the alternative genre categories included in this research, namely early, contemporary, contemporary classical, roots, rock, pop, jazz and crossover (see separate definitions). In addition, the term 'classical' refers to music which has been composed in a tradition of instrumental and/or vocal forces, e.g. orchestra, and to music which has typically been written for performance in concert halls or similar environments and notated and performed from a written score. During the period under investigation in this study, 'classical' music would typically be applied to that which might be broadcast on BBC Radio 3.
Competition/giveaway	An article offering readers the opportunity to receive a prize or gift/s.
Contemporary (music)	For the purpose of this study, this genre category refers to music composed approximately <i>less</i> than two decades earlier than the date of the newspaper publication in which the reference appears, and/or deemed to be "reflecting today's design or fashion trends; modern". ⁷
Contemporary classical	A genre category created in this thesis to accommodate music which encompasses the features of 'classical' music (see above) but which has been written in the recent past (in approximately the two decades preceding the date of the newspaper publication in which the reference appears) and actively follows the modernist lineage of composers such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

⁴ Bashford, Christina: "Chamber Music", as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 434.

⁵ Sadie, Stanley: "Choir", as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 704.

⁶ Hertz, Daniel and Bruce Brown: "Classical", as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 924.

⁷ Allen, Robert (ed.): *The Penguin English Dictionary*, p. 296.

Critic	A term applicable to those who evaluate the qualities, character and composition of art, literature or music in a professional context. In this study the term is applied to those operating in both academic and journalistic contexts.
Crossover	This term is used when referring to a piece of music which incorporates the stylistic features of two distinct genres, usually but not always as a result of a conscious and deliberate act by its author.
Early (music)	Whilst the term has historically been applied to music from the Baroque period or earlier, in this study late Baroque composers such as Bach and Handel have been treated as pre-classical, and recorded as classical, rather than early. Therefore, music categorised as early in this study would typically refer to renaissance and medieval music.
Editor	The title given to “a person who is in charge of a newspaper or a section of a newspaper” ⁸ and the person responsible for the overall style, image and content of a publication and (see also ‘Sub-editor’ below).
Event Guide	Text which provides factual, non-critical information about forthcoming events, usually distinguished from an advert (see above) by its appearance.
Feature/profile	An “article in a paper or magazine, which is a report on a matter of interest but not related to a particular news item”. ⁹ In this thesis it typically applies to an extended text which focuses upon an event, individual or group of individuals, detailing for example his/her/their past or recent professional and/or personal activities and/or musical output, and may include quotes from the artist/s in question.
Feature/profile& Review	A category created in this thesis to accommodate articles which contain a combination of the features of a ‘feature profile’ (see above) and a ‘review’ (see below).
Freelance journalist	A journalist (see below) with no fixed employer or permanent commitment to any particular publication; “an independent worker who works for several different companies but is not employed by any of them”. ¹⁰
Genre	A classification or category ratified by convention.

⁸ Collin, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Glossies	Relatively expensive magazines, often ‘style magazines’ (see below), with illustrations printed on glossy art paper.
House style	The “editorial style ... which is adopted in a publishing company” ¹¹ which aims to ensure consistency across its products. This will for example cover rules on text layout including standardised spelling, application of capitalisation and style of punctuation. “The aim of house style is to give consistency to all the products of a publishing house, thus making them more recognisable to the reading public”. ¹²
Inkies	A term used by some when referring to music magazines printed roughly between the late 1950s and mid 1980s using cheap print processes which left readers with ink-stained fingers. In the UK, the ‘inkies’ typically, although not exclusively, referred to <i>Melody Maker</i> , <i>Sounds</i> and the <i>New Musical Express</i> .
Instrumental	Music performed by a solo instrumentalist or group of instrument players who are not specifically referred to as members of an orchestra, band or chamber ensemble.
Jazz	As per the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, jazz is defined here as “1) a musical tradition rooted in performing conventions that were introduced and developed in the 20 th century by African Americans; 2) a set of attitudes and assumptions brought to music making, chief among them the notion of performance as a fluid creative process involving improvisation; and 3) a style characterised by syncopation, melodic and harmonic elements derived from the blues, cyclical formal structures and a supple rhythmic approach to phrasing known as swing”. ¹³
Journalism	A term referring to material written by journalists for publication in a range of possible media, including magazines, other periodicals, websites, television, radio and newspapers. In this thesis the term refers to newspaper journalism unless otherwise stated.
Journalist	A person who writes for newspapers and/or magazines, who may or may not be a specialist on a particular subject or number of subjects.
Musical theatre	Music performed as part of a show or musical, the latter being defined

¹¹ Collin, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

¹³ Tucker, Mark: “Jazz”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, pp. 903-904.

broadly as “Western popular musical theatre...in which sung and danced musical numbers in popular and pop music styles are combined within a dramatic structure”.¹⁴

Obituary	A text which announces a death, often comprising a brief biography of the deceased.
Opera	A performance mode where music is performed as part of an operatic production, the latter being defined as “a drama in which the actors sing some or all of their parts”. ¹⁵
Orchestral	A performance mode whereby music performed by an orchestra, defined in its generic sense as “any large grouping of instrumentalists...said to function orchestrally”. ¹⁶
Piece rate	A means of payment calculated per piece of work produced.
Pop (music)	The difficulties in defining this term as distinct from the term ‘popular music’, and also from ‘rock’ music, are well documented. ¹⁷ In this study the term has been used to describe a type of popular music which broadly speaking can be described as “‘softer’, more ‘arranged’ ... more ‘commercial’, more obviously ‘entertainment’” ¹⁸ than rock music.
Preview	An article giving a foretaste of an event or product before it is widely available or open to the public. In this thesis a preview typically refers to a profile of a performing artist or group of artists and some details about their recent musical work. It may be written when, for example, an artist or group will shortly be going on tour and their manager or sponsor wish to publicise the matter. Unlike a ‘feature/ profile’ a preview it is tied to a time specific event.

¹⁴ Snelson, John and Andrew Lamb: “Musical”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 453.

¹⁵ McClymonds, Marita: “Opera”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 416.

¹⁶ Spitzer, John and Neal Zaslaw, “Orchestra”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 530.

¹⁷ To name a few: Taylor, Paul: *Popular Music Since 1955: A Critical Guide to the Literature*, pp. x – xiv; Shuker, Roy: *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, pp. 225-226; Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street: *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, pp. 94-95; Middleton, Richard: “Pop”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, pp. 101-103; Middleton, Richard: “Popular Music”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, pp. 128-129; Middleton, Richard: “Rock”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, pp. 485-486.

¹⁸ Middleton, Richard: “Pop”, as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, pp. 101-102.

Preview and Review	A category created in this thesis to accommodate articles which contain a combination of the features of a 'preview' (see above) and a 'review' (see below).
Review	In this thesis a music 'review' refers to a text in which a journalist gives a critical evaluation a piece of live or recorded music or some other cultural media.
Rock (music)	As stated above (see 'Pop' music), the difficulties in defining this term as distinct from 'pop' music, are well documented. In this study the genre of rock music applies to a particular type of popular music which is "harder", more aggressive, more improvisatory and more closely related to black American sources... (and) ...more 'authentic' and closer to 'art'" ¹⁹ than pop music.
Roots (music) ²⁰	In this study, this genre category refers capaciously to music that is heavily influenced by or culturally entrenched in traditional folk music, including country, soul, folk, world ²¹ , r'n'b, gospel, blues and a diverse range of ethnic music.
Specialist music press	Refers to publications usually published weekly or monthly, typically lifestyle consumer magazines but also including music trade papers and fanzines, which specialise in or have a major element of their content devoted to music coverage, especially popular music coverage or any of its sub genres.
Style magazines	Magazines, typically emerging during the 1980s, whose main focus is fashion, image and lifestyle (see also 'Glossies' above).
Sub-editor/ Sub	A person working in a subordinate position to the Editor (see above) "whose job it is to make ... copy ready to be printed... their tasks include checking the facts, correcting grammar and punctuation to conform to the house style, writing crossheads and headlines with setting instructions...and giving the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

²⁰ In order to classify articles by genre, a distinction between classical and popular music was necessary; in subdividing popular music, separate categories were deemed appropriate for a) jazz, acknowledging that it attains its own particular breed of journalists, b) rock, in light of its critical traditions derived from the specialist music press, c) pop, given its tendency to be written about in a way that does not necessarily concern the music itself, and d) 'roots' music, in order to accommodate other music, such as blues and soul, and thus avoiding any unnecessarily superfluous subdivisions.

²¹ The construction of 'world music' as a marketing term in the UK is described in Frith, Simon: "The Discourse of World Music", pp. 305-306.

printers full information about the size, shape and typography of each story".²² Sub-editors edit texts submitted by journalists, design the layout of pages, and check that all content that will appear in their publication is accurate, adheres to word counts, remains within the law, makes sense and reads well.

Tabloid	Newspapers whose size is roughly half that of a typical broadsheet (see above), whose appearance and content is usually "popular in style with easily assimilable news and features, bold headlines, large photographs", ²³ and whose production is "usually aimed at a down-market readership". ²⁴
Vocal	Music performed by a single performer, or a group of performers who do not form part of a choir.

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

CD	Compact Disc
<i>MM</i>	<i>Melody Maker</i>
<i>NME</i>	<i>New Musical Express</i>
PR	Public Relations
UK	United Kingdom
WPL	Words per line

²² Dick, Jill: *Freelance Writing for Newspapers*, p. 9.

²³ Brown, Lesley (ed.): *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 3198.

²⁴ Collin, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

Introduction

This study was motivated by an article written by Simon Frith and Jon Savage (1997) in which the authors expressed their concern that the study of popular culture had become “a method of uncritical celebration”,²⁵ blaming the Thatcher government in particular for creating the climate which fostered this deterioration. In response to these authors’ claims, this thesis was conceived in order to explore the possible manifestations and motives of any such change in particular relation to music coverage in the English broadsheet press, an as yet relatively untouched area of academic enquiry.

This research charts a series of developments in the normative approaches to music coverage adopted by a sample of broadsheet newspapers from 1981 through to 1991. It illustrates that at the beginning of the period music-related writing typically appeared on a single arts page, comprising a series of overnight concert reviews predominantly associated with classical music, alongside an occasional small black and white photographic accompaniment, with written material most often supplied by long-standing music specialists employed directly by the newspaper, although in some cases by editors or staff writers from other areas of the newspaper who possessed an interest in music. However, by the end of the period examined newspapers had dramatically expanded in size and music coverage was often placed not only on the arts pages but also within the many different component parts of the newspaper, including supplementary magazines; music coverage was frequently accompanied by large pictorial illustrations, which were increasingly printed in colour, and music writing was more often provided by an increased number of freelance music journalists. By the end of the period examined, the broadsheet press appears to have shifted its stance to one which readily embraced popular music coverage, to the extent that the former dominance of classical music was being challenged, and overnight concert reviewing was diminishing in favour of feature writing, an approach preoccupied with personalities and celebrity rather than the music itself.

The secondary literature, reviewed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, although relatively scant and diffuse, points towards a number of contributory factors in bringing about these changes, although the political climate of the time was cited with notable regularity. In particular, the Wapping Dispute of 1986 and the associated disempowerment of the printer’s unions, itself a direct consequence of the Thatcher administration’s trade union reforms and the climax of several years of poor industrial relations between newspaper owners and the print workers’ unions, enabled News International, chaired by Rupert Murdoch, to move its print production processes from Fleet Street to a new plant in Wapping, operated by a new workforce. This shift to new premises equipped with the latest new production technology heralded the demise of hot-metal typesetting processes, and the use of new electronic page composition technology allowed journalists to input their copy directly, developments which dramatically reduced workforce requirements and costs. The adoption of improved production technology quickly led the broadsheets to develop a range of new supplementary sections and

²⁵ Frith, Simon and Jon Savage: “Pearls and Swine: Intellectuals and the Mass Media”, p. 7.

magazines and contributed to the birth of a clutch of glossy magazines in the wider marketplace, developments which have also been cited as influencing changes in broadsheet music coverage.

It has also been suggested that the Thatcher government's free-market policies were instrumental in increasing the commercial focus of the broadsheet press, and in uniting the broadsheets' increasingly profit-driven strategies with those of music industry public relations departments, each aiding the fortunes of the other in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Notwithstanding a series of personnel changes at proprietorial and editorial level, seemingly instigated to improve commercial focus, it has been suggested that this climate resulted in increased levels of advertising, which reduced the space available for written content, increased segmentation of readers according to market groups and an increased emphasis upon consumer guidance. Furthermore, both the government and broadsheet press were cited as increasingly courting popular music as the decade progressed, with the former wishing to manipulate younger voters ahead of the 1987 general election and the latter searching for a younger readership and increased profit.

Commercial and political developments aside, the review of secondary literature has suggested that the 1980s witnessed more widespread shifts in approaches to cultural journalism within the specialist music press, mainstream journalism and academic writing. In addition it has been noted that several former specialist music press writers were hired by broadsheet publications during this period in order to expand their music coverage and maximise their younger readership. These stylistic and attitudinal changes have been cited as important contextual factors against which the changing nature of broadsheet music writing, within the period to be examined, may be considered.

In preparation for the detailed investigation presented in this thesis, a Masters dissertation was conducted which explored changes in popular music journalism in the English broadsheet press between 1981 and 1988 with reference to *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* newspapers.²⁶ This initial investigation traced the emergence of regular broadsheet popular music criticism during the 1980s and recorded changes in the frequency, quantity and style of popular music criticism adopted during the period, whilst also observing an increase in music industry advertising. Alongside the results of the Masters dissertation and the contextual landscape depicted by the secondary literature, the rationale behind this research was further influenced by a series of points in the researcher's personal academic and work experience. Firstly, the music components of the Masters degree had highlighted the tensions between journalistic and academic approaches to popular music along with a large body of historical material relating to the specialist music press; however this served to highlight the absence of any similar critical material concerning the mainstream news press, arguably a medium with a potentially far greater audience and certainly one more familiar to the researcher. Secondly, an English studies component of the Master's degree introduced the researcher to the application of critical discourse analysis which consequently generated a desire to

²⁶ Skellington, Jennifer: *Changing Music Journalism: an Examination of the Changes in Popular Music Criticism in the English broadsheet press 1981 – 1988*.

explore how this approach may relate to music writing across different publications and genres. Thirdly, the results of the Masters dissertation had suggested that classical music was gradually being pushed off the page by coverage of popular music forms and the researcher wished to explore whether this corresponded with the experiences and recollections of classical music journalists, and finally the researcher's employment background as a Human Resources Manager and Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development fuelled a desire to understand the way in which recruitment practices and all other aspects of music journalists' employment conditions may have impacted upon their creative output and the nature of the writing published within quality English newspapers.

In light of these points, and alongside the Masters dissertation findings, the subsequent reading of additional secondary literature and a preliminary discussion with a *Times* newspaper music journalist, it was decided that the programme of research presented in this doctoral thesis would broaden the original line of enquiry to encompass *all* music genres, a wider range of publications and an extended time period, and explore the views and recollections of a number of broadsheet music journalists themselves.

As such, this thesis approaches the area of enquiry by a) identifying the nature of any relevant secondary literature which informs the area under investigation b) constructing a database to record *all* music-related writing within a sample of broadsheet newspapers over an extended sample time period in order that a series of quantitative analyses may be conducted to seek out answers to specific research questions posed by this research relating to shifts in the nature and quantity of music-related coverage, whilst also providing evidence to prove or disprove the claims reported within the secondary literature c) examining styles of writing adopted within a sample of broadsheet newspapers through the application of a tailor-made model based on a critical discourse analysis approach, and d) conducting interviews with a selection of broadsheet music journalists themselves in order to gain their recollections and views on the subject of this thesis, compare their recollections and experiences with those reported in the secondary literature and with the database analysis findings, to understand whether classical music journalists had indeed felt that their work were increasingly being sidelined as a result of a growth in popular music coverage, and to explore their employment conditions during the period under review. This programme of research is presented within this thesis as follows:

Chapter 1 reviews the current literature relating to music journalism in the English news press and provides a contextual and conceptual framework for this research through reference to aspects of the publishing, political and employment conditions relative to the period under review. It shows that whilst a multitude of studies have considered changes within the specialist music press during the latter part of the twentieth century, only a handful of authors have touched upon the topic of English broadsheet music writing, and of those who have, none have provided any substantial independent consideration or evidence of its changing nature during the period examined here. Similarly, whilst a number of texts provide useful historical and conceptual entry points, none have provided a formal

quantitative or qualitative examination of the subject or have investigated the perspectives of English broadsheet music journalists themselves. This chapter therefore defines the way in which this thesis makes a new and unique contribution to this relatively unstudied area of musicology.

Chapter 2 explains how the scope for this thesis was determined and shows how, methodologically, the research draws upon two primary sources, namely music-related articles from a sample of broadsheets during the eleven year period under review, and the findings of one-to-one interviews with thirteen music journalists who were active contributors to the broadsheet press during the period examined, with several classical music writers included so as to explore the impact which any growth in popular music coverage may have had upon their work; the findings from each being triangulated through reference to a range of secondary sources.

Chapter 3 presents a series of research questions which are answered, primarily through the presentation of a succession of graphical illustrations, with reference to evidence derived from the detailed quantitative analyses of the database of broadsheet music-related content constructed for the purposes of this research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the detailed close analysis of thirty eight broadsheet music reviews in relation to a series of hypotheses based upon the findings of the literature review and interviews with broadsheet music journalists. Within a series of themed sections, the analysis is approached from a genre perspective and the findings within each category are considered chronologically.

Chapter 5 conveys the findings of the one-to-one interviews conducted with the broadsheet music journalists who participated in this study with a view to understanding their experiences and perspectives on broadsheet music coverage in the period 1981 to 1991, including the factors which they considered to have been instrumental in bringing about change. The interview results are approached thematically examining topics including personal critical styles, editorial attitudes, genre hierarchies, the political and publishing environment, the consequences of the Wapping Dispute, narratives of decline, music advertising and journalists' employment conditions.

Chapter 6 assimilates the key findings of this research, in terms of the changes evidenced here and the possible motives for such shifts, before moving on to consider the negative light in which these changes have been perceived, the wider socio-political and theoretical context for this work and the possible ongoing legacy of the changes identified in this study. After considering the constraints and limitations of this study, a conclusion is presented which highlights how this research not only provides the first detailed formal quantitative and qualitative academic insights into music criticism in the English broadsheet press between 1981 and 1991, but also provides hard evidence which might encourage further scholarly study in this area and contribute to recent academic debate concerning an alleged deterioration in the quality of English music journalism.

Chapter 1 – Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the literary context for this thesis by examining the nature of existing texts, scholarly or otherwise, which relate to the subject area under investigation. Whilst there is some recent evidence to suggest that academic interest in broadsheet newspaper music journalism is increasing, the current literature concerning music journalism has tended to focus upon either the UK specialist music press or North American rock and pop writing from around the 1950s onwards. As such, a wide net was cast in order to uncover material relevant to the subject of this examination, the collective results of which are presented in this chapter with the literature grouped into three categories, as indicated below, which in turn form the structure of section 1.2; the material within each section is approached more or less chronologically:

1. Literature which specifically addresses music journalism in the English broadsheet or mainstream news press.
2. Literature relating predominantly to the specialist music press but which also either:
 - a) refers in passing to music writing in English mainstream newspapers, addresses the critical styles adopted by English music writers or the means by which music critics established their authority.
 - b) provides a biographical or autobiographical account with some relation to English broadsheet music writing or offers a published collection of works which include examples of music writing from the English broadsheet press from the period under review.
3. Texts providing a contextual backdrop for this research, including those which offer insights into the newspaper publishing climate, including specific accounts of employment within the broadsheet press, texts relating to the organisational and employment conditions of those involved in broadsheet newspaper production and those which provide the theoretical models through which the human resources issues to be explored in this thesis may be considered.

A summary of the literature review findings is provided in section 1.3.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Literature which specifically addresses music journalism in the English broadsheet or mainstream news press.

A useful starting point when considering the development of English broadsheet popular music writing is provided by Davies whose biography of *The Beatles*, first published in 1968, recalled the time when “*The Times*’ musical critic, William Mann, did a long and serious review of their music in which he talked about their pandiatonic clusters and submediant key switches. He (Mann) said John

Lennon and Paul McCartney were ‘the outstanding English composers of 1963’²⁷; Davies also recalled when “in *The Sunday Times*, Richard Buckle, reviewing John and Paul’s music used in the ballet ‘Mods and Rockers’, said they were ‘the greatest composers since Beethoven’²⁸. The phrasing within each of these newspaper articles not only reflects the absence of a specific lexicon for the coverage of popular culture and low art within the broadsheet press at that time, but also highlights the mindset of English broadsheet music writers, and by default their editors, who were accustomed to critiquing high art and could only account for The Beatles’ music through the same mode of criticism awarded to ‘serious’, then synonymous with ‘classical’, music in ‘serious’ newspapers.

In the autobiographical preamble to his 1979 printed collection of reviews, Andrew Porter provided several useful insights into music journalism in the English broadsheet press. As a classical music critic for the *Financial Times* for nineteen years prior to 1972, and subsequently a music critic on *The New Yorker*, Porter argued that by the late 1970s music journalism still bore some resemblance to academic appraisals: “In England, a line between musicology and musical journalism is not strictly drawn”,²⁹ a claim which he supports by referring to his own ability to combine the role of broadsheet music writer and visiting fellow of All Souls College, Oxford University, and the similar position of two other senior academic musicologists who also contributed material to the English broadsheet press. Interestingly, from an employment perspective, Porter also describes the informality of his recruitment to *The New Yorker*, involving an unprompted telephone call followed by lunch with its Editor; a useful starting point for understanding how newspaper publications may have appointed music critics around that time.

Six years later, in the introduction to his published collection of articles, all of which had originally appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, Larkin provided a compelling discussion of the state of jazz criticism and of the quality of jazz music itself. In relation to the former, Larkin exclaims his mystification and exasperation with jazz critics’ seemingly mindless adherence to a “party line”,³⁰ which insists upon producing “undiscriminating praise”³¹ even for performances and recordings when such appraisal would be inappropriate. In response to this trend and in light of Larkin’s disapproval for such critics, the articles published in his collection of works are offered as models of writing intended to demonstrate a more balanced approach to jazz criticism in which the writer does not feel obliged to espouse the greatness of each and every artist that is reviewed. Larkin’s genre-specific commentary suggests that by the 1980s certain areas of music criticism had become farcical and lacking genuine subjectivity, such that by the mid 1980s “most of them (critics) are, after all, involved with ‘the scene’ on a commercial day-to-day basis”.³²

²⁷ Davies, Hunter: *The Beatles*, p. 289.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Porter, Andrew: *Music of Three Seasons: 1974 – 1977*, p. ix.

³⁰ Larkin, Philip: *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961 – 1971*, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Published in 1999 and addressing arts journalism more broadly, Dawson Scott examined the processes by which journalists decide which cultural products are awarded coverage in the national news press, both tabloid and broadsheet. He referred to the influence of advertising in this process suggesting that “the addition of an unexpected advertisement can easily mean that a cultural event which has fought its way through all the other vagaries of the selection process is abruptly abandoned. A small design change can let in a whole new category of work for consideration. Conversely, the addition of extra pages because of an increase in advertising can have the reverse effect, hurriedly elevating something that might not have passed muster normally into the spotlight”,³³ and points out how “factors a million miles from cultural evaluation can nudge the cultural agenda this way and that”.³⁴ Dawson Scott considered that arts journalists reflect the ideology of the publications to which they contribute, such that “for the tabloids, the market place, including its capacity to make the cultural product available to the readership, largely determines what is important and what is not. If it’s top of the charts, it’s in”,³⁵ whereas with broadsheets he argued that a different process existed:

“Broadsheet journalists have to have faith as individuals that whatever they believe is important is important in broad cultural terms, not just in terms of their newspaper readership ... broadsheet writers may not just defer to markets for mass popular culture but, one way or another, they are acutely aware of the value systems within the niche markets occupied by higher – or lower – brow art-forms ... In order to get round the awkward problem of considering art where money does matter – art from the cultural industries – most upmarket media outlets adopt a strategy of continuing to accept the cultural importance of older-established but distinctly minority interest art-forms and then elevating mass popular culture to the same status. If opera and rock and roll...are all dishes on the same cultural buffet, these can then be discussed and mediated using much the same lexicon of appraisal ... Put (over)simplly, consumers of tabloids know what they like; consumers of broadsheets are prepared to enter into a discussion about what they should like even if in fact they don’t like it. Shrum calls this ‘the status bargain’; consumers of high culture are prepared to give up some of their opinion rights in exchange for the higher status...that competent talk about the art-works confers”.³⁶

Dawson Scott therefore proposed that broadsheet arts journalists are more representative of their readerships than their tabloid counterparts, citing Matthew Engel’s comments “It’s a great deal easier working for a paper like *The Guardian* where one is, in essence, writing for one’s chums”,³⁷ and concluded that broadsheet journalists have “signed up for this status bargain. And why not? They may have to deal with works they don’t especially like, but they are repaid handsomely in status terms for being able to write about those works with authority – an authority largely derived from the act of

³³ Dawson Scott, Robert: “Bridging the cultural gap: How arts journalists decide what gets into the arts and entertainment pages”, p. 49.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53, including extract from Shrum, *Fringe and Fortune*, p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

writing about them. At the very least they are acting as some sort of notary public for the bargain which has been struck".³⁸

Jones edited collection of essays, published in 2002, specifically addresses pop music and the press, and contains three scholarly texts which are perhaps the most pertinent to this study. In the introduction to his work, Jones points out that despite the multitude of academic studies of popular music which are published each year and the many outlets for popular music criticism in magazines and fanzines, very little, even by 2002, had been written about popular music criticism in relation to journalism and mass communication scholarship. He also expressed his concern that very little had been written about the critics themselves, in terms of their underpinning values and working practices: "(d)espite a spate of recent anthologies that collect a handful of critics' work, we know little with regard to their learning and knowledge about writing",³⁹ and similarly he points out that "(w)hat music critics and journalists believe their work to be bears scrutiny".⁴⁰ As such, Jones concludes that "(m)uch important work remains to be done"⁴¹ and offers his collection of essays as a resource to fuel future study.

The first essay in Jones which is of particular relevance to this study is Cloonan's examination of popular music coverage in Britain's national press from the 1950s onwards, largely ignoring the regional press and specialist music press and placing emphasis predominantly upon the national *tabloid* press. Significantly, Cloonan suggests that the political climate of the 1980s was vital in encouraging the national press to take a more concerted interest in pop music, firstly by encouraging reportage of the fascist disruptions which sometimes triggered violence at certain live music events at that time, and secondly because, as Cloonan cites:

"sections of the press were attempting to get back into bed with pop in order to fulfil another tenet of Thatcherism – naked commercial self-interest... This was the era of New Pop artists, who were generally more amenable to the press than the punks had been. Record company publicists sought to exploit this to the full by getting the backing of the British press in a new attempt to fulfil the pop myth of conquering America".⁴²

Cloonan described how the British news press shifted from a position that resisted popular music to one which openly embraced it, distinguishing tabloid and broadsheet attitudes to pop music coverage such that the former tended to focus upon the more sensationalist elements of pop, whilst broadsheets tended to "be more involved in carrying aesthetic criticisms and reviews".⁴³ Cloonan asserted that music criticism increasingly permeated a broad range of periodicals to maximise its audience, and

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁹ Jones, Steve: *Pop Music and the Press*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴² Rimmer, D. and Kohn, M. as in Cloonan, Martin: "Exclusive! The British Press and Popular Music: The story so far...", p. 122.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

acknowledged that by the end of the twentieth century “the “quality press” was regularly carrying reviews of popular music gigs and albums and hence was playing a key role in keeping pop in the public consciousness”.⁴⁴ Of particular interest is Cloonan’s reference to genre hierarchies within broadsheet music coverage; he argues that “pop is usually reviewed *as pop* and seldom, if ever, as *music*. Here the demarcation lines between popular and classical music are drawn as firmly as ever”.⁴⁵ Cloonan also highlighted the interdependencies between pop music and the news press, arguing that they rely upon each other to boost sales, albeit with different overarching agendas, with the news press acting as an “aesthetic arbiter”⁴⁶ in which their critics promote the artistic credibility of popular music and maintain its profile in the public sphere.

The second pertinent text found in Jones is provided by Gudmundsson et al. in which the authors describe three key turning points in British rock criticism between 1960 and 1990,⁴⁷ the third of which being located in the mid 1980s. The authors acknowledge that a dominant feature of this third shift was the fact that by 1985 “quality dailies were firmly established channels for rock criticism”.⁴⁸ The authors also describe two further new trends which had emerged by 1986, namely “the segmentation of readers with regard to age and genre preferences... (and) ... a polarising of consumer oriented criticism aimed at record buyers, and elitist criticism aimed at well-educated connoisseurs of underground, alternative, or avant-garde musics”,⁴⁹ changes which they, like Cloonan, attribute to the changing commercial environment.

In terms of critical writing styles, the authors suggested some fundamental differences between the trajectories of UK and US rock criticism:

“In retrospect, what strikes an outsider most in the US scene is the continuity: Individual differences aside, the discursive strategies launched by the founders seem to function as well in today’s market as they did in the “anti” atmosphere of the 1960s. In Britain, on the other hand, the turning points are rather conspicuous; the critics are more susceptible to fads in model paradigms as well as in music...UK critics have privileged a subjective form of criticism, positing themselves as enlightened fans with a knack for stylish, carnivalesque prose and strong judgements”.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Gudmundsson, Gestur et al. attribute the first turning point to American rock criticism, American counterculture and New Journalism whose influences inspired a wave of changes to both the staffing and editorial stances of the British specialist music press during the 1970s, whilst the second turning point was linked to the punk rock era of 1976 -1978 since “it vastly increased the market for writing on rock...and it opened the door to a new breed of critics, who in a few years were to shake the authority of the critical orthodoxy”. Gudmundsson, Gestur et al., “Brit Crit: Turning Points in British Rock Criticism”, p. 54.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Thirdly, Frith's essay, in Jones, offers perhaps the most germane reference point so far. In constructing his sociology of rock criticism, Frith describes his experience of working as a rock critic for both *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* during the 1980s, observing several pertinent differences between the career paths and professional treatment of different arts critics (music, art, theatre, books, films, TV and rock music). In particular, Frith argues that classical music and jazz critics were treated very differently from rock critics in terms of the resources granted to them by the broadsheets and the means by which they were awarded their critical authority; Frith argues that whereas broadsheets treated classical and jazz critics as musicologists on the basis of their often academic or teaching background, whose role was essentially to "explain the inexplicable",⁵¹ rock critics were deemed to act as consumer guides, who whilst situating artists within a musicological or ideological tradition, were not being employed as musicologists as such. Like Cloonan, Frith proposes the existence of internal hierarchies whereby rock critics were significantly more likely than their classical or jazz counterparts to have their writing cut or removed from the publication to make room for advertisements. In terms of critical approaches to rock writing, Frith points out that whilst rock criticism, by its very nature, is founded upon populism and the celebration of popular taste "there has always been a very thin line between populism and anti-intellectualism",⁵² thus drawing attention to the range of styles which may have been adopted by different writers in the news press.

Echoing Cloonan's observations on the effects of the changing commercial environment during and after the 1980s, Frith argues that the rock agenda of newspaper arts pages were increasingly subject to the influence of music industry public relations departments

"...one discovery I was surprised to make ... was how much rock coverage is lifted straight from the press release, how tightly PR departments control the arts-page rock agenda".⁵³

Frith notes how rock coverage was increasingly adopted by newspapers for their own branding purposes, arguing that these commercial pressures corrupted the former role of rock critics, as intermediaries between musical and subcultural spheres and the readership at large, to be replaced by a role which served merely to provide newspapers with the access to popular music and culture, to maximise their appeal to a specifically targeted readership.

1.2.2 Literature relating predominantly to the specialist music press

In view of the lack of literature devoted to English broadsheet music criticism, it was necessary to draw upon the relative abundance of material referring to the specialist music press in order to gain further insights into developments in English music criticism during the 1980s. This section will not provide a full summary of the literature relating to the English specialist music press (for a detailed review of key texts in this field see Frith's summary history of the music press⁵⁴, Forde's thesis⁵⁵ or

⁵¹ Frith, Simon: "Fragments of a Sociology of Rock Criticism", p. 236.

⁵² Ibid., p. 245.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 242.

⁵⁴ Frith, Simon: *Sound Effects: Youth, leisure, and the politics of rock'n'roll*.

Lindberg et al.⁵⁶), but instead offers a summary of specialist press related literature which impinges directly upon the subject of this thesis.

1.2.2.a Literature which refers in passing to music writing in English mainstream newspapers, addresses the critical styles adopted by English music writers or the means by which music critics established their authority around the period under investigation.

A pertinent starting point is provided by Gillett who offered an account of both the employment context for music critics around the early 1970s, the influence of advertising at that time and the accepted styles of writing within the British specialist music press before the broadsheets took a serious interest in pop and rock. Firstly, Gillett explained how freelancers were paid after their article was published according to its “prominence in the paper and the number of words actually used, as opposed to the number of words submitted”,⁵⁷ and noted that as an additional incentive “records are bait and currency for the rock’n’roll journalist; he gets ‘review copies’ free from the record companies, keeps those he likes, and sells or trades off what he doesn’t want”.⁵⁸ Secondly, Gillett points out the susceptibility of the weekly music press, and to a lesser extent the monthly music press, to accept revenue from music industry advertisers in order to maintain their own financial viability, often resulting in advertisements taking the place of rock writing and influencing the choice of editorial content. Regarding styles of writing, Gillett suggests that editors often preferred “the most outrageous and provocative”⁵⁹ submissions, but criticised the quality of writing in the weekly music press for being produced in haste, by in-house staff writers, stating “in their rush to keep up with the news, their articles can range from bland cynicism to near hysterical enthusiasm without ever having the tone of simple enjoyment or distaste that a casual listener more likely feels”.⁶⁰ Finally, Gillett identified two schools of music journalism which he believed to exist at that time, namely “one willing to consume and report on the record industry’s product, the other more interested in covering music that was not necessarily being ‘pushed’ by the publicists”.⁶¹

In 1982, in a brief article in *The Sunday Times*, longstanding music critic Derek Jewell lamented the fading era of popular music which he had known during the course of his twenty year career and implied his awareness, if not with some anxiety, of impending change in the nature of broadsheet popular music coverage, not only as a consequence of the instalment of his successor Simon Frith but also as a result of the musical tastes which flourished in the specialist music press;⁶² “What’s self-defeating about so much modern criticism is that it seems to have forgotten the prime rule: popular music is meant to be *popular*. There seems to be a perverse desire to write most about what people

⁵⁵ Forde, Eamonn: *Music Journalists, Music Press Officers and the Consumer Music Press in the UK*.

⁵⁶ Lindberg, Ulf et al.: *Rock Criticism From The Beginning: Amusers, Bruisers and Cool-Headed Cruisers*.

⁵⁷ Gillett, Charlie: “So You Wanna Be a Rock and Roll Writer (Keep a Carbon)”, p. 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶² In particular he refers to “that venerable delinquent, Melody Maker”. Jewell, Derek: “The age of change”, *The Sunday Times*, 7/3/1982, p. 39.

patently don't like too much and, even worse, to keep telling them they shouldn't like what they patently do. If you look at the top 30 albums in the charts almost any week and then read what is being written about in the average pop journal, the two worlds (or half of them at least) seem to bear little relation to each other".⁶³

Towards the end of the same decade, McRobbie echoed Gillett's suggestion that two schools of music journalism existed, namely "the more conventional academic mode, and what might be called a new form of cultural journalism".⁶⁴ McRobbie suggested that the latter of these two approaches, which concerned itself less with the music itself but rather with the cultural phenomena surrounding it, was particularly evident in the style bibles and glossies which emerged during the 1980s and, more importantly, that it had also infiltrated the mainstream press and the more 'serious' weekly and monthly magazines in existence at that period. In terms of the more academic mode of writing, McRobbie observed that significant political and intellectual shifts had occurred during the 1980s resulting in the work of leading US and UK critics, the latter being drawn from specialist music press, overlapping with work being undertaken within academia such that "while pop journalism has moved towards a more serious mode, academic writing has, to some extent, shifted towards a lighter, more essayistic style".⁶⁵

The significance of the political shifts which occurred during the 1980s was also noted by Denselow, a prolific broadsheet music writer for *The Guardian* during the 1980s, in his critical commentary on the politicisation of popular music since the Second World War. Denselow analysed the relationships which evolved between popular music and the turbulent political climate of the time, citing in particular the protest music recorded and performed by UK rock artists, and referring to the adoption and manipulation of popular music through channels such as Red Wedge, Live Aid, stadium rock and rock concerts which acted as charity events, as attempts to attract younger voters ahead of the 1987 general election and "bring popular culture and mainstream party politics together".⁶⁶ Whilst not discussing broadsheet music criticism specifically his text offers valuable insights into the climate for music criticism as written within the context of the Thatcher government rule.

Published in 1991, Théberge's examination of production developments relating to musicians' magazines in the 1980s also provided a useful contextual reference by exploring the economic, technical, social and historical factors significant to music magazine publishing and the music industry during the early 1980s. Despite relating specifically to the US, Théberge demonstrated how the increasingly heavy reliance upon advertising at that time ensured that musicians' magazines attracted higher readerships and were more profitable than their general-interest counterparts. Théberge also points out how technological innovations, including computerisation and in-house typesetting, may have increased the viability of music magazine publishing at that time and highlights

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ McRobbie, Angela (ed.): *Zoot Suits and Second Hand Dresses*, p. xi.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

⁶⁶ Denselow, Robin: *When the Music's Over: Story of Political Pop*, p. 231.

the role which magazine editors played during the 1980s, namely “they have not only reflected the musical and technical trends manifest during this period but, as well, that they have helped to establish those trends in the first place”.⁶⁷

In the same year, although again not with exclusive reference to the broadsheet or specialist press, Frith explored both the populist and non-populist approaches to the criticism of cultural goods, recognising that “the exercise of taste and aesthetic discrimination is as important in popular as in high culture but is more difficult to talk about”,⁶⁸ placing at least some of the blame for this difficulty upon the fact that “cultural studies emerged from disciplines in which issues of taste and judgement are kept well away from issues of academic analysis and assessment”.⁶⁹ Frith highlighted how academic approaches to cultural goods had changed, both over time and within subject disciplines, and considered the different positions within the trichotomy ‘if it’s popular it must be bad’ versus ‘if its popular it must be bad, unless it’s popular with the right people’ versus ‘if it’s popular it must be good’.⁷⁰ It was the latter of these three positions, the ‘populist’ approach, against which Frith wished to protect popular culture, arguing that in considering objects deemed to be of either ‘high’ or ‘low’ cultural value, “the fact that the objects of judgement are different does not mean that the processes of judgement are”.⁷¹ Frith stressed his dissatisfaction at that time with the language employed in the application of cultural judgements and argued that “aesthetically, there is no immediate reason to treat popular culture any differently from high culture”,⁷² and ultimately, he suggested that the criticism of ‘high’ art should not shy away from the application of value judgements, as commonly applied to the ‘low’, and that the evaluation of ‘low’ art could adopt some of the analytical approaches traditionally reserved for the ‘high’.

Toynbee, in 1993, focussed upon the changing function of the music press from the 1970s to the early 1990s, arguing that it was specifically during the 1980s that the role of the music press, as a regulator of music industry output, became subverted; partly as a result of increased music coverage in other media formats like radio and television. Toynbee argued that the emergence of ‘New Pop’⁷³ was a significant factor in influencing press coverage of popular music, associating it with the spectacular rise of glossy colour pop magazines *Smash Hits* and *No. 1* between 1981 and 1983. Echoing Frith’s recognition of the changing approaches to cultural criticism, Toynbee also argued that the critical method employed by journalists in the specialist music press during this period was somewhat unstable and highlighted the significance of the new generation of rock journalists at the *NME* and *Melody Maker* who, by the late 1980s, had introduced a new approach to writing which encompassed

⁶⁷ Théberge, Paul: “Musicians’ Magazines in the 1980’s: The Creation of a Community and a Consumer Market”, p. 289.

⁶⁸ Frith, Simon: “The Good, The Bad and the Indifferent”, p. 571.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁷³ “‘New Pop’ is the term applied to the British art pop movement in the early 1980s. Leading exponents included Culture Club, Yazoo and Depeche Mode”, as in Toynbee, Jason: “Policing Bohemia, pinning up grunge: the music press and generic change in British rock and pop”, p. 299.

elements of cultural studies, semiology and post-structuralism. Yet he argued that “the significance of most contemporary writing on rock, whatever the theoretical inflection, is that it remains remarkably close to the 1970s model established by Charles Shaar Murray and his cohort”⁷⁴ and suggested that, broadly speaking, critical approaches to music in the ‘inkies’ fell into two categories: “Firstly there are broadly pedagogic pieces designed to supply a kind of ‘liberal rock education’ ... Then there are canonical updates whose purpose is to reference sources important for contemporary developments in rock”.⁷⁵ Like McRobbie, Toynbee also commented upon the relationship between journalistic and academic approaches to pop criticism, and argued that academic analysis of pop music “gains an extra validity when it is understood that the author is a fan, a member of a community of taste, and so, by extension, a reader, or former reader of the music press”.⁷⁶

Also concentrating upon the tensions between journalists and scholars in addressing popular cultural studies, Jones agreed that “There is indeed a struggle between scholars and journalists, but it is not only a struggle over the commodities they write about. It is also the place each holds in the social structure and the relationships thus formed to those commodities, and as such it is a particularly fierce struggle and deserves continued attention”.⁷⁷ Jones recognised that “If there is a war at hand, it is not simply scholar versus journalist, or even scholar versus scholar; it is often one that scholars and journalists wage internally”⁷⁸, and also argued that “it is a struggle for fame by two groups that have acknowledged the slim availability of fortune...a struggle among those whose egos are stroked only by recognition (hence a need to publish), and/or a struggle to *matter* by those working in two professions whose influence seems to be on the wane”.⁷⁹ Jones concludes that “both groups can be understood as public intellectuals, or at least may be considered as engaged with intellectualising the public. As there appears to be less and less of the public (or at least less of its attention singularly focussed) to go around in a fragmented media-world, it should be no surprise that both groups’ voices struggle to be heard”.⁸⁰

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Frith and Savage claimed that the study of popular culture had become little more than “a method of uncritical celebration”,⁸¹ and that during the 1980s the Thatcher government’s policies and manipulation of the national press served to “elevate the authority of experience ... over the authority of the intellect, and subtly to change what is meant by knowledge”,⁸² thus undermining the cultural authority of academics. The authors argued that the shift in favour of reporting from experience and the adoption of a populist stance, which they condemn as

⁷⁴ Toynbee, Jason: “Policing Bohemia, pinning up grunge: the music press and generic change in British pop and rock”, p. 296.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁷⁷ Jones, Steve: “Reading Pop: The Press, the Scholar and the Consequences of Popular Cultural Studies”, p. 204.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁸¹ Frith, Simon and Jon Savage: “Pearls and Swine: Intellectuals and the Mass Media”, p. 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

“chit chat (which) still poisons the air”,⁸³ serves to preclude readers from challenging what they read. The authors argued that the 1980s witnessed an explosion in magazine and newspaper production, as a consequence of Thatcher’s free-market policies, which created not only the birth of an exaggerated form of consumerism, but a situation in which “there were not the resources to spread the jam of reportage of investigative journalism...over the white bread of the new supplements. Rather the *Sunday Times* section 5, ‘The culture’, the *Guardian* ‘Weekend’, the *Independent* magazine, and so forth, depend on the ‘feature’, a type of writing in which the journalist’s style elevates individual opinion to the level of social commentary”.⁸⁴

Frith and Savage also noted that during this period the shift towards single corporate ownership across various media, including newspapers and magazines, resulted in a PR-led agenda which, combined with the geographical dispersion of Fleet Street, intensified competition so much as to disconcert former editorial and journalistic confidence. This situation, the authors argued, resulted in “a constant jockeying for market position, for the right ‘demographic’”⁸⁵, and a situation whereby “newspapers are increasingly organised around assumed consumer tastes (and ever expanding lifestyle pages), rather than by their readers’ supposed interests as citizens”.⁸⁶ The authors argued that through the course of the 1980s, critical authority shifted from the academy to newspaper columnists who, “armed with the power of anecdote, take on a particular sort of importance, valued not for their intellectual independence, but for their ability to articulate common sense... columnists whose job is less to make readers think than to save them from thought, less to make them see events anew than to ensure a breakfast-table conversation that is held in clichés”.⁸⁷

In the same year, and echoing many of the issues and sentiments expressed by Frith and Savage, Guttenplan evoked a picture of a declining British broadsheet press. Reporting on a conference held that year, devoted to the future of quality newspapers, in which “a distinguished gathering of top editors and pundits from Britain, the U.S., France and Germany quickly degenerated into a slanging match, with the Americans and Germans accusing most of the quality British broadsheet press – specifically *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent* – of “dumbing down” under the malign influence of Rupert Murdoch”,⁸⁸ Guttenplan cited examples of debased editorial which had appeared on the front page of *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and the non-profit foundation owned *Guardian* newspaper that year which, he argued, would never have appeared in the “pre-Murdoch “golden age”.⁸⁹ Guttenplan also cited Stephen Glover, a co-founder of *The Independent* as saying that British broadsheets had by that time gone “from boutiques to supermarkets”,⁹⁰ implying an erosion of their former elitist qualities in order to meet the demands of

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Guttenplan, D.: “Dumb and Dumber?”, p. 18.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the mass market, and himself argued that “*The Times* under Murdoch has become deliberately less elitist”⁹¹ in conjunction with “changes in British society, as the mandarin class who once read *The Times* is replaced by the more numerous slightly less well-educated children of the Thatcherite revolution”.⁹²

Focussing upon the increased commercialisation of the music press, Warner argued that the 1980s, particularly in view of the emergence of *The Face* magazine and the rise of the glossies, acted as a key turning point in the development of UK rock journalism and saw rock criticism in the music press and the music industry as unashamedly intertwined and requiring serious enquiry into the way in which the many hundreds of titles published in the UK, both magazines and newspapers, had come to interact with pop music itself. Warner also described how the audience for rock and pop was in transition during the 1980s and how a new publication was launched to suit audience needs: “(a) generation of rock followers now in their thirties and forties and even older, were keen to get a pop ‘fix’ but had no inclination to learn about the latest ephemeral cult in either ‘band-land’ or ‘club-land’. The result was a publication called *Q*”.⁹³ Warner also points out how the new style ‘glossies’ began to infiltrate the styles of other publications during the 1980s such that “In the middle of the decade, the scene changed. Publishers were keen to tap in to the new magazine boom that the style titles had helped to engineer”.⁹⁴

Hubbs also contemplated the most appropriate critical approach to pop-rock criticism, and rejected the idea that either the ‘social effects’ or the ‘notes’ should take priority, instead arguing that a more meaningful approach would acknowledge the role of ‘imagination’ in the creation and appreciation of music. With particular reference to Jungian psychology, Hubbs proposes a more holistic discourse which does not divide the musical experience into distinct component parts, “music and lyrics, musical and cultural issues, production and reception, etc”,⁹⁵ but rather “examines the musical experience in an integrative and extradisciplinary way - drawing in the various musical and “extramusical” dimensions of meaning in pop-rock performance, and drawing forth a discourse and approach that can include and engage scholars, fans, and listeners from both within and without the music academy”.⁹⁶

An invaluable backdrop for considering the changing role and nature of music criticism in the UK is provided by Maus et al., whose explanation of “Criticism” stated that:

“Superficially, music criticism during the second half of the 20th century conformed to models developed 100 years earlier. Critics for newspapers and magazines were expected to

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Warner, Simon: “Behind the Print: Reading the Rock Press”, p. 112.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Hubbs, Nadine: “The Imagination of Pop-Rock Criticism”, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

inform readers about a composition or performance by using appropriate metaphors, images and adjectives, with only occasional reference to analytical detail. The dominant critical method was comparison: juxtaposing a particular performance with others by the same artist or with different performances of the same composition by different artists, or juxtaposing a new work with others by the same composer or in a similar style. Criticism thus continued to be preoccupied with issues of tradition...By the end of the century, the main critical controversies no longer concerned new music or performance styles, but whether classical music had a greater claim on any culture's attention than other forms of music and entertainment...The critic's relationship with the music audience changed because readers could no longer be assumed to share a similar background of musical experience. Pop music and world music became more dominant, challenging the boundaries and claims of classical-music criticism...Critics were no longer assumed to articulate 'advanced' tastes...Critics were also influenced by trends in musical scholarship, in particular the growing emphasis on the political and cultural contexts of music and music making".⁹⁷

In considering the role of music criticism as a source of consumer guidance, Frith argued that "Consumer guidance might be thought the lowest form of criticism, and grading the week's pop output has certainly debased the serious record review in Britain...The consumer guide and the letter grade were introduced to newspapers' rock coverage by Bob Christgau".⁹⁸ However, Frith also admires journalists of a particular breed who, like Christgau, have "used day-to-day rock criticism (rather than the classroom or the learned tome) to reflect on where we're coming from and where we should be at".⁹⁹ Frith argues that "a good critic's skill is with words, not notes"¹⁰⁰ and espouses an approach to music criticism which "in its very articulation both invites disagreement and makes the reader follow through, in the music, why they disagree".¹⁰¹

The theme of significant change and deterioration in music journalism during the 1980s reappears in Gorman, in which the author depicted a "golden age of the rock and pop press"¹⁰² lasting "from the late '50s...until the early to mid '80s"¹⁰³ and illustrated possible reasons for its disappearance whilst also accusing the broadsheet press of "fillet(ing) the music press for critical insight and spicy tit bits in equal measure".¹⁰⁴ Gorman compiled hundreds of short statements from individuals involved in the UK specialist music press, some of whom also wrote for the broadsheet press, many of whom made glancing observations about the broadsheet press, for example, John Peel explained how "I was *The Observer's* Man in pop for about four or five years. Then they got a new editor...and she felt that rock had to be written about seriously and treated as though it was an A-level subject. I'd write about

⁹⁷ Maus, Fred et al.: "Criticism", as in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 694.

⁹⁸ Frith, Simon: "An Essay on Criticism", p. 66.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 69.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Gorman, Paul: *In Their Own Write: Adventures in the Music Press*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

it semi-seriously, in a kind of piss-take way”.¹⁰⁵ Peel also offered an insight into his employment relationship with *The Observer*:

“I consider myself to be the last of the gentleman critics, because a gentleman doesn’t claim expenses. I remember going to review Europe... We stayed in a hotel in Birmingham, and when I got home I realised it had actually cost me money. I asked somebody who was a practising journalist how much he thought I got paid and he named a sum six times what I was actually getting. It was at that point that I realised they were taking the piss. The relationship with *The Observer* kind of petered out...”.¹⁰⁶

Richard Williams described how the new ‘listings’ section of *The Times* expanded after Harold Evans became Editor: “After I resigned from *Melody Maker*, I went freelance, and then a few months later Harry Evans took over at *The Times*. He wanted to do a weekly listings guide, which I worked on. Gradually, it took over the weekend section, and then I became features editor”,¹⁰⁷ whilst Tom Hibbert reflected upon the broadsheets inclusion of rock writing: “That’s what’s boring about rock now... it is everywhere. When your father knows more about Echobelly than you do, because he’s read about it in *The Times*, you know something’s up”.¹⁰⁸

Interestingly, the Foreword to Gorman’s book is provided by prominent English rock critic Charles Shaar Murray, who proposes that it was the increasingly intimate engagement between the music press and record companies’ marketing strategies that terminated the heyday of rock press, which for him constituted the *NME* of the 70s and the underground press whose relative independence served to counteract the mainstream press, of which he believed the latter “existed primarily to serve the pop industry”.¹⁰⁹ For Murray, British popular music journalism, and popular music itself, at the beginning of the twenty first century had become a depressing state of affairs, concluding that “most pop, and writing about pop, is just toothpaste. Once upon a time it wasn’t. Once upon a time this shit actually mattered – to a lot of different people and for a lot of different reasons, but it mattered just the same”.¹¹⁰

The ensuing content of Gorman’s publication focussed upon the specialist music press. However his objectivity is perhaps questionable, given that neither his methodology nor the precise details of the contexts in which the numerous statements were obtained were made explicit, and the arrangement of both the text and Gorman’s indexing, much of the latter of which is arranged by author, to some extent frustrates the search for any consistent commentary relevant to broadsheet music coverage.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁰⁹ Murray, Charles Shaar as in Gorman, Paul: *In Their Own Write*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Forde's thesis is particularly important, from both a contextual and methodological perspective, since it investigated the relationship between UK music journalists, music press officers and the consumer music press during the 1990s with consideration given not only to matters regarding the cultural and aesthetic elements of music writing but also the professional and organisational context in which music journalists operated. Methodologically the study combined first hand interviews with music journalists and music PRs, along with participant observations in three newsrooms and one PR department. Forde provided an invaluable analysis of the market, organisational, professional and socio-cultural operators within a particular element of UK mainstream consumer titles (in particular those concerned with "rock, indie, pop, dance and leftfield"¹¹¹ genres).

Writing again in 2001, Forde also examined the subsidence of personality journalism in the British music press. Methodologically Forde again drew upon oral evidence gained through the interviews and participant observations with music journalists, editors, editors-in-chief and press officers from the specialist music press obtained as part of his previously published PhD research. Forde concluded that the role of the music press, as a means for artists gaining entry into the wider media, had diminished dramatically and that "(t)he systematic bureaucratic restructuring of the music press in the light of increasing market ambiguity has brought about an occupational imbalance between freelance gatherers and processors, the former increasingly de-democratized, and the latter increasingly central in the promulgation of rigid and conservative (corporate) house-style set by executives".¹¹² As a result of editors expressing fewer individualistic attitudes, for fear of estranging their readers, Forde argued that within the popular music press, since the mid-1990s, it had become increasingly difficult to discriminate the voice of the individual from that of the overall magazine, a process which he described as "the bureaucratic transmutation from idiosyncratic polyglottism to branded monoglottism".¹¹³

Sturges, focussing upon UK weekly music magazines, also reported a deterioration in the quality of music criticism towards the end of the twentieth century, arguing "(t)he standard in the weekly music press in particular has dropped radically in the past two decades"¹¹⁴. Sturges contrasted the "heyday" of the 'inkies',¹¹⁵ which she defined as a time when they "contained the most vital and provocative appraisals of pop"¹¹⁶ which made their readers feel like 'insiders', with the state of affairs in 2002, arguing that "pop has become a mere extension of the entertainment industry and acquiescent music journalists have become its cheerleaders, content to stand on the sidelines rather than wade in and get their hands dirty".¹¹⁷ Reminiscent of Gorman, Sturges argued that "If the Seventies was the golden

¹¹¹ Forde, Eamonn: *Music Journalists, Music Press Officers and the Consumer Music Press in the UK*, p. 6.

¹¹² Forde, Eamonn: "From Polyglottism to Branding: On the Decline of Personality Journalism in the British Music Press", p. 40.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Sturges, Fiona: "From weekly to weakly", p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Sturges does not offer precise dates in relation to her claims, although a definition of 'inkies' is provided on p. 10 of the Glossary of Key Terms and Abbreviations in this thesis.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

age of the music press, the Eighties was the beginning of the end...the music press went from having two major players (*NME* and *Melody Maker*) to a scrum of weeklies, monthlies and glossies".¹¹⁸ Importantly, in asserting that the downfall of the music press was partly attributable to its loss of the monopoly on pop, Sturges cited the contributory role of the broadsheet press: "In the past 15 years broadsheet newspapers have also wised up to pop's broad appeal and increased their coverage".¹¹⁹

Whilst based upon examples of music journalism sourced from the US, Hamelman's discussion of the theme of 'garbage' and 'trash' in rock and roll criticism, as a metaphor by which journalists critique the music they hear, illustrated a potential model for the thematic approach to the textual analysis of samples of English broadsheet music journalism, once relevant topics had been identified.

As seen above, Jones has pointed out that to date very few studies have examined popular music criticism from the perspective of the popular journalist, hence Klein's study, which explored the divide between popular culture critics and high culture critics by means of in-depth interviews with fifteen US music critics, is of significant interest. Klein argued that "If criticism has the ability to elevate the status of the object it evaluates ... in the case of popular criticism, the cultural object has the ability to lower the status of the critic",¹²⁰ and, citing Frith who suggested that "critics of higher arts enjoy a higher status than do critics of popular arts, resulting in a hierarchy that mirrors that of the arts being evaluated",¹²¹ Klein observed that "The match between critic and art is surely no coincidence, although the process by which the distribution occurs is largely uncharted",¹²² thus emphasizing a lack of research or transparency in this area. Klein also highlighted that "When it comes to qualifications, however, pop music critics are, unlike their classical counterparts, forced to establish their authority without the aid of paper credentials".¹²³ As a result of the differences in formal training between high culture critics and popular music critics, the latter, according to Klein's interviewees, "must establish their cultural authority by consistently displaying their qualifications – proficiency as a writer, breadth of knowledge, and studied judgement regardless of personal preferences".¹²⁴ Klein also detailed the numerous roles of the popular music critic, namely as creative artists in their own right, providers of consumer guidance, producers of text for their publishing institutions, cheerleaders for the industry and historical arbiters, and argued that "popular music critics must manage their potentially compromising roles while ensuring that the consumer and the self as artist are the parties ultimately served, as honestly and fairly as possible"¹²⁵ and concluded that it is only through "examining how critics conceive of their authority and function, and how different roles

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Klein, Bethany: "Dancing About Architecture: Popular Music Criticism and the Negotiation of Authority", p. 1.

¹²¹ Frith, Simon as in Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹²² Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

reflect and shape authority”¹²⁶ that we can begin to understand the “impact of the culture divide on the establishment of critical authority”.¹²⁷

In 2005, Quirk and Toynbee discussed the differences between academic and journalistic discourse on music by means of a dialogic structure between an academic (Toynbee) and non-academic music writer (Quirk). Unlike Frith and Savage, Toynbee does not set academic writing and pop journalism in opposition, but instead considers the difference between what he sees as “effective writing and ineffective writing”.¹²⁸ By considering the tendency of non-academic writers to adopt a first person voice and “treat the subjective experience of music using a subjective approach”,¹²⁹ Toynbee, recognised that “there are real advantages with avowed subjectivity in the case of rock: it can bring you close to the position of the listener and performer; it even makes you something like a ‘participant observer’”,¹³⁰ however he stated that the disadvantage of the approach is its failure to “reflect on the nature and status of subjectivity itself”.¹³¹ In response, Quirk questioned the assumption that academic writing is inherently more objective than first-person narration, arguing that “a distanced, scholarly tone can too easily masquerade prejudices and value judgements that can’t help but be paraded naked for readers to see and evaluate for themselves when one writes in the first person”¹³², and argued “I don’t believe allowing a level of subjectivity into your writing precludes you from approaching the object of your analysis systematically”.¹³³ Quirk concluded that “Any writer who relies solely upon objective truths is a bit like a scientist who’s doomed to slice a particular substance in half endlessly in a fruitless quest for its indivisible essence”,¹³⁴ whilst both authors agreed that the existing approaches adopted by journalists and academics represent two “differently dysfunctional relationships with the truth”.¹³⁵ In relation to this study, the authors’ dialogue incites the observation of subjectivity within broadsheet music writing, across different publications and at various points within the period under review.

Like Frith, Savage, Cloonan and Denselow, Neil Spencer, former editor of the *NME*, associated a deterioration in Britain’s music writing with Thatcherism during the 1980s. He reflected that “Naturally, my personal nomination for *NME*’s Golden age was the era of my editorship (1978-1985), less for its circulation increase (which peaked in 1980) than for the way it treated music as part of a wider oppositional culture in which politics, books, movies, illustration and photography all had a major role...It’s a landscape I know well from my time as *NME* editor, when music and politics

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Quirk, Tim and Jason Toynbee: “Going Through the Motions: Popular Music Performance in Journalism and in Academic Discourse”, p. 408.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 407.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

became inextricably entwined".¹³⁶ He described how a style of writing within the *NME* had been lost for ever: "Enthusiasms for assorted art movements – Derrida, Dadaism, Brecht, Industrialism, Anarchism, Structuralism – raged through the office like super-bugs...*NME*'s politics – anti-Tory, anti-nuke, pro-green – seem mainstream now, but were defiantly oppositional when the chi-chi *Face* was cheering 'God Bless Mrs Thatcher'. Our oppositional stance didn't please everyone... Eventually a new editor was installed, the paper carted back to IPC's grim tower and neutered, its politics confined to musing on precisely why Morrissey so loved the Union Jack".¹³⁷

Christgau also reflected upon the language and textual styles applied to the description and analysis of popular music writing by both journalists and academics. Christgau admitted his hostility to two tendencies common among music writers, namely "in academia, the theory-driven disdain for so-called belletrism, and in journalism, the priggish and/ or hard boiled drive to expunge colour, pretension, and all their putatively reader-unfriendly relatives from the public prints".¹³⁸ By using short examples of writing by American journalists Lester Bangs and Anthony DeCurtis, and academics Sheila Whiteley (English) and Susan McClary (American) Christgau illustrates and defends his argument that those who chose an extreme or distinguishable individual style borne out of devotion to the music itself, and unencumbered by academic jargon, produced far superior results to 'fence-sitters' whose writing is shackled by the generic conventions and formal training of their discipline. Christgau therefore implied the need for greater attention to be devoted to the craft of writing about music and, although he makes no specific reference to English broadsheet music writing, his article nevertheless invites consideration of the language applied to music writing in the broadsheet press.

Brennan's study is also invaluable here in his consideration of the music press from the perspective of musicians themselves. Based upon interviews with several musicians across the rock, pop and jazz genres, and with reference primarily to British musicians and the British music press, Brennan exposed some of the concrete effects of the music press upon artists, including its influence upon the commercial viability of records and the genre labelling process which in turn establishes a particular kind of audience and overall success of artists (particularly those new to the market). In stating the importance of press reviews being carefully timed to coincide with album releases he highlighted the importance of coverage being carefully placed in the right publications "according to the genre conventions of the music industry".¹³⁹ He argued that the "press hierarchy for the independent rock field finds glossy music magazines at the top and broadsheets roughly at the bottom of the list. But this hierarchy is reversed in the jazz sector: quality dailies become the most desirable form of coverage, while jazz magazines are relegated to the bottom",¹⁴⁰ as one of his interviewees clarified:

¹³⁶ Spencer, Neil: "Fraternising with the NME", <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,1519735,00.html>. Accessed 23/02/2006.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Christgau, Robert: "Writing about music is writing first", p. 416.

¹³⁹ Brennan, Matt: "The rough guide to critics: musicians discuss the role of the music press", pp. 224-225.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

“This is what they [central buyers] want: *Independent, Times, Observer, Guardian*. All within the space of three weeks. The most important thing is *Guardian* CD of the week... But you want to have all of those main quality dailies and Sunday papers, and that should be enough to get you in. Anything else, radio play, specialist magazines, is a bonus. Broadsheets are where it's at for jazz. You could get a fantastic review in *Jazz Review, Jazz Wise, Jazz UK* [specialist jazz magazines], doesn't really make a huge amount of difference to the distributors. The readership's very low – it's for fans and nerds... whereas getting five copies into every HMV in the country, getting it racked, getting space in *HMV choice*, that's when you start to sell some volume, and for that they want to see broadsheet reviews tied in with the release date”.¹⁴¹

Brennan also highlighted the significant degree of influence which broadsheet coverage had come to exert upon consumers, the industry audience and subsequent media attention. Whilst Brennan recognised the ideological differences and conflicts between musicians and music journalists, namely that one aims to earn a living either through releasing records while it is the job of the other to write about musicians products, he concluded that “what musicians and critics share is the problem of dealing with the tension between aesthetics and business, between art and commerce”.¹⁴² Brennan acknowledged that “There is still much work to be done in this area, such as addressing the question of whether this tension applies across all fields of the music press, or examining how the tension between art and commerce in the press has developed over history”,¹⁴³ and thus fostering consideration of these factors, across the broader spectrum of genres, within the broadsheet press as distinct from the specialist music press.

In the same way that Sturges' article reacted to the closure of *Melody Maker*, Petridis commented on the closure of *Smash Hits* in February 2006, which he blamed partly upon its own success during the 1980s which sparked imitation by countless others. Petridis also considered shifts in the production of music itself, beginning during the 1980s, referring to the increased ‘over-production’ of pop acts and stating “Pop music in 2006 is no better or worse than it was 25 years ago... but the people who make it have been focus-grouped out of existence. They are witless automations, smiley conduits for the groundbreaking work of pop production teams”,¹⁴⁴ and were partly to blame for the debased approaches to music criticism adopted by the specialist press. However, Petridis does not explicitly state how such shifts may have extended to the broadsheet press.

Similarly, in 2004, when *The Face* magazine's owners EMAP announced that the May issue could well be its last, Calcutt suggested that, like *Smash Hits*, its demise was partly due to the success of the publication and its countless subsequent imitators, whom he stated included “not only other magazines

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 233.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Petridis, Alexis: “Down the Dumper!”, <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,5390428-110428,00.html>. Accessed 02/05/2006.

but also broadsheet newspapers (who) have adopted a format that was once exclusive".¹⁴⁵ Calcutt described the magazine's style as one which was "aimed at readers looking to establish themselves by displaying their superior knowledge of style and culture – half-way between super-consumers and performance artists...Not that *The Face* preached submission to what was becoming Thatcher's Britain, but it helped turn revolt into style and, subsequently, defeat".¹⁴⁶ Like many others above, Calcutt also implied the osmosis of the critical styles formerly adopted by the specialist music press to the broadsheet press by the end of the twentieth century.

Lindberg et al. have provided a thorough account of rock criticism from its advent, covering both the US and the UK, and make several references to the contributions of specific English broadsheet music critics. The authors offer two chapters which relate to the period covered by this study; the first covering rock criticism in the period 1978 to 1985, and the second spanning 1986 to 2004. In the first of these periods, the authors argue that "the industry no longer had to rely on the music press as had often been the case in the 1960s and 1970s...Greater coverage of popular music in all kinds of mass media, radio, newspapers and television meant a widening of the discourse ... Rock critics, once at the forefront of the growing strata of "new intellectuals", were being reduced to a less significant intellectual segment of the larger strata of new middle class in the course of the 1980s".¹⁴⁷ During the second period, the authors note the significance of changes in the specialist music press, including the growth in circulation of rock monthlies and the increasingly sophisticated segmentation of the market, and suggest that "after the mid-1980s a new somewhat different angle on rock-subversiveness appeared";¹⁴⁸ furthermore the authors propose that, in light of the adoption of certain academic leanings, "Their theoretically informed habitus has made many critics entering the field after 1985 assume a priori that they were joining in a kind of art discourse".¹⁴⁹ This differentiation between the pre and post 1985 periods is particularly useful, reinforcing the identification of 1986 as the pivotal year for this research.

Finally, in 2009, Frith attributed the ongoing sense of deterioration in rock music criticism to "a perceived change in the conditions of rock music: on the one hand, record companies were signing the wrong sort of acts, releasing the wrong sort of records, overwhelming the critic with the scale and effectiveness of their marketing; on the other hand newspapers and magazines no longer gave music writers the space or freedom to be critical".¹⁵⁰ Turning to address the diminished fortunes of classical music writing, Frith argues that "the decline of classical music criticism in the quality press is related to the dire effects of record selling generally"¹⁵¹ and cites Max Bridle's claim that classical music critics "'lost their influence as movers and shakers' in the early 1990s thanks to 'philistinism amongst

¹⁴⁵ Calcutt, Andrew: "Why The Face No Longer Fits", <http://www.spiked-online.com/articles/0000000CA4D8.htm>. Accessed 27/04/2006.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Lindberg, Ulf et al., *Rock Criticism from the Beginning*, p. 223.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

¹⁵⁰ Frith, Simon: "Going critical: writing about recordings", p. 267.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

arts editors and decreased coverage in newspapers”.¹⁵² However, perhaps most pertinent to this study is Frith’s observation that:

“Academic work on classical music coverage in the press does indeed confirm that over the last fifty years there has been an increasing tendency to treat classical music as entertainment and that this reflects the marketing practices of the record industry. Such changes are obvious in *The Times*. In 1955 classical record reviews took their place among the concert reviews and notices of recitals; the papers didn’t carry any reviews of rock records. Fifty years later, classical CD reviews appeared among a rather larger number of rock, pop, jazz, folk and world music reviews, and the paper is more likely to run features on popular than classical recording artists”.¹⁵³

1.2.2.b Biographies, autobiographies and collected works

Several pertinent insights can be gained from the personal narratives provided by English broadsheet arts and music critics who contributed to the national press during the period under review via their biographies and autobiographies. For example, when reflecting upon her move, in the early 1980s, from the specialist music press to the mainstream press, Burchill, in 1998, stated that “In those days writers from the pop papers didn’t write for the proper papers, mainly because no one ever asked them to. And in the eighties I was criticised a great deal by my erstwhile colleagues for ‘selling out’”.¹⁵⁴ Whilst John Peel’s autobiography sheds no light upon his broadsheet writing experiences, the biography provided by Mick Wall does offer a few pertinent insights; for instance when referring to the period during the 1980s when Peel became a music critic for *The Observer*, Wall states that Peel was “(r)estricted to only the artists the paper deemed appropriate for their readership”,¹⁵⁵ and draws attention to Peel’s increasing attention to world and roots music on his radio show during the period examined here:

“The mid-eighties also saw the Peel show embrace New York hip-hop for the first time, which led to equal exposure for early Chicago house, Detroit techno and a new-found passion for what he endearingly termed in the early days the ‘African pop’ of artists like Fela Kuti and the Bhundu Boys”.¹⁵⁶

Also of relevance here was an archived interview with John Percival, dance critic for *The Times* since 1965, since it described the publication’s reluctance to pay for its critics expenses, the increased prevalence of previews as opposed to reviews and the move away from overnight reviewing, which he states “came from the meanness of publishers: ‘new technology’ in printing made it possible to do

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Burchill, Julie: *I Knew I Was Right*, p. 154.

¹⁵⁵ Wall, Mick: *John Peel*, p. 132.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

layout etc. either quicker or cheaper, and they tended to choose the latter".¹⁵⁷ Percival also commented upon the attitudes of John Higgins, Arts Editor for *The Times* from 1970 to 1988, who he alleges insisted upon exclusivity or at least a guarantee that *The Times* would have the story first, and about whom he reflected as being "by far the best Arts Editor I ever worked for".¹⁵⁸ Interestingly, Higgins argues that "classical ballet reached a peak of popularity and excellence in the sixties and seventies and then went into gradual decline",¹⁵⁹ thus reinforcing the sense of decline in arts coverage during the 1980s.

In addition, several anthologies and collections of music writing, including work by writers who contributed to the English broadsheet press between 1981 and 1991, also provide a range of relevant insights. For instance, Charles Shaar Murray¹⁶⁰ presents a chronological collection of his writing from the period 1971 to 1990 from predominantly specialist music publications, e.g. *NME* and *Q* magazine, with only three of the seventy or so pieces sourced from English broadsheets: two from *The Observer* in 1989 (although one of which concerned film as opposed to music) and one from *The Daily Telegraph* in 1990, perhaps revealing the author's preference for his magazine contributions over his broadsheet writing. Similarly, Tony Parsons' self-edited collection of his own writing, whilst including articles from *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian*, was mostly derived from the specialist music press and glossies (including *NME*, *Arena*, *Empire*, *The Face*), although he admitted that as opposed to being attracted to writing for fanzines "I have always been excited by mass circulation newspapers...(E)ven when punk rock was just a few dozen people in London, we dreamed of conquering the mainstream. The underground is for losers".¹⁶¹ Jones' collection of 'classic' rock and pop writing includes articles published in English broadsheets, including those by Mick Brown in the *Sunday Times Magazine* (1987), John Sweeney in *The Independent Magazine* (1989),¹⁶² along with a handful of broadsheet music articles from the 1990s.

In the introduction to his published collection of magazine and newspaper articles (many of which were published in the broadsheet press) Savage (1996), described writing for the weekly music press and the style magazines of the 1980s:

"I was working for the weekly music press – *Sounds* and *Melody Maker* – where the prime object was to fill sixty or seventy broadsheet pages a week. Always concerned with the new, always living in the instant, the weeklies were, and remain, pure pop with rock window-dressing...Moving to *The Face* in 1980 was a liberation: writing at a shorter length, working closely with designer Neville Brody and photographer Chalkie Davis for a full integration of images and text. Following intuition rather than market research, Nick Logan produced a

¹⁵⁷ Cruickshank, Judith: "John Percival", http://ballet.co.uk/magazines/yr_02/dec02/cruickshank_int_percival.htm. Accessed 15/09/2005.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Murray, Charles Shaar: *Shots From The Hip*.

¹⁶¹ Parsons, Tony: *Dispatches from the Front Line of Popular Culture*, p. vii.

¹⁶² Jones, Dylan (ed.): *Meaty, Beaty Big & Bouncy*, pp. 241-250 and pp. 255-272 respectively.

magazine that raised the game of everyone who worked there: each issue a wonderful object...*The Face* came to define the mood of the mid 1980s. ...Politics entered the equation, just as the full influence of *The Face* was felt in the mainstream media: by 1987, almost everybody who had worked on the magazine had been taken up by what was then still Fleet Street... in 1989, the only logical conclusion was for me to stop full-time journalism... This decision was assisted by the increasing insecurity that followed after the restructuring – many would say destabilisation – of Fleet Street”.¹⁶³

When explaining how little of the book’s contents had been altered, he states that in the first section (covering the period 1977 to 1979) there are “some small cuts to compensate for the almost total lack of sub-editing at *Sounds*”,¹⁶⁴ perhaps illustrating the freedom and control he wielded over the final published copies at that time. He also adds that “On a few other occasions, where the cuts on publication were hurried and brutal, I have reinserted a few lines from the article as originally handed in”,¹⁶⁵ changes which were presumably more frequently experienced in subsequent years.

As a writer whose work spanned a range of music magazines and national broadsheet publications, Ben Thompson’s collection of works offers a celebration of pop music at the turn of the twenty first century. Whilst concentrating on the period from 1991 to 1998, in his introductory chapter Thompson imparts his views on broadsheet music writing during the 1980s, stating that: “the less colourful character profile of broadsheet newspaper pop coverage has remained, like a dreary great-uncle restrained in a harness at a family gathering, mercifully out of the spotlight”.¹⁶⁶ Thompson goes on to describe his views upon broadsheets’ attitudes to pop coverage:

“In his book *Performing Rites*, Simon Frith identifies the hidden job description of the music press writer as being to establish a sense of community, or us against them – an idea of the writer and the band as a charmed circle to which the reader can only gain admission by means of the purchase price of a magazine or newspaper. The hidden job description of the national press music writer might fairly be said to be the opposite of this. By breaking down the barriers between specialist and non-specialist, he or she is supposed to make the general reader feel better about aspects of culture from which they may feel excluded. There is nothing implicitly evil about this project. That’s just the way it turns out. Even as late as the late eighties there was still a renegade thrill about pop coverage in the British broadsheet press: it didn’t have to be any good – the very fact of it being there was enough. While the tabloids had wholeheartedly embraced the exploits of the early eighties Britpop aristocracy (Boy George, Wham, etc) as a natural extension of their interest in the royal family and soap

¹⁶³ Savage, Jon: *Time Travel*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Thompson, Ben: *Seven Years of Plenty*, p. 10.

opera, their larger format rivals maintained a healthy suspicion of vulgar populist manifestations that might all too easily get in the way of their opera coverage".¹⁶⁷

Thompson concludes that, in the end, the broadsheets had done pop music writing no favours, stating that "For all its supposed tenderness, the broadsheet editor's kiss often has poison on its tongue. Within some quarters of the culture which still gets called Fleet Street a lingering hostility persists towards all forms of artistic endeavour. This hostility expresses itself in a general tendency to view creativity as at best something we ought to be suspicious of, at worst an aspect of dysfunction".¹⁶⁸

In a published collection of his own work Richard Williams,¹⁶⁹ whose music writing appeared in various publications including broadsheet newspapers, states that none of the writing in this publication appears in exactly the same format as printed in the original publication, implying either significant editing at the time of original publication or subsequent editing for this particular publication, and it is not possible to determine which pieces appeared in broadsheets.

Dylan Jones, former *Guardian* writer and Senior Editor at *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times* published a collection¹⁷⁰ of what he considered to be 'classic' pop/rock criticism including work by many English music writers. Of the numerous texts presented very few derived from broadsheet writers or broadsheet publications; those which did included articles by Julie Burchill, Robert Sandall, Miranda Sawyer, Charles Shaar Murray, Robert Chalmers, Mick Brown, Nick Kent, John Sweeney and Georgina Howell. However, the genre-specific nature of the collection limits its usefulness in considering the broader spectrum of music criticism whilst very few of the broadsheet articles included here derived from the period considered in this study.

In a deliberate attempt to redress the gender balance, McDonnell and Powers produced an anthology of rock writing¹⁷¹ by female critics, although the writers' whose work was included were predominantly US based, as were the publications from which most of the writing was extracted, with the exception of British based writer Caroline Coon. It was with similar intentions that Evans published her collection of rock writing by female critics, stating that with regards to breaking into the male-dominated canon of rock writing "there is a balance which needs redressing, a history which needs to be told, and a tradition which needs to be established".¹⁷² Evans' collection presented examples taken from both the UK specialist music press and broadsheet press between 1986 and 1996, including the work of English broadsheet writers Suzanne Moore, Charlotte Raven and Emma

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Williams, Richard: *Long Distance Call*.

¹⁷⁰ Jones, Dylan (ed.): *Meaty, Beaty, Big and Bouncy: classic rock and pop writing from Elvis to Oasis*.

¹⁷¹ McDonnell, Evelyn and Anne Powers (eds.): *Rock She Wrote. Women write about rock, pop and rap*.

¹⁷² Evans, Liz: *Girls Will Be Boys*, p. xxii.

Forrest. Whilst the former text contained no references to English broadsheet music criticism, both collections are nevertheless useful here in view of the feminist perspective they invoke.

1.2.3 Texts providing a contextual backdrop for this research

Numerous texts provided a valuable contextual backdrop for this research, in terms of the newspaper publishing climate and the organisational and employment conditions of those involved in broadsheet newspaper production during the period examined.

Several texts set the context for understanding the newspaper publishing environment in the period immediately prior to that being considered in this study. For example, Sisson¹⁷³ offered useful insights into industrial relations practices within Fleet Street, with particular emphasis on pay structures, management attitudes towards pay, work patterns and the influence and roles of chapels (workshop organisations) and trade unions on industrial relations. Engwall¹⁷⁴ also illuminated the nature of newspapers as organisations through his descriptions of the behaviours and work patterns of writers and technical printing staff during the 1970s and also provided an overview of the organisational structure, hierarchies, recruitment and promotion policies, reward policies and the way in which different newspaper personnel were related to overall business objectives. Towards the end of the decade, Curran offered a critique of the newspaper industry, and demonstrated how the “shrinking number of newspapers are now largely controlled by a handful of multi-medial conglomerates; how the ‘free market’ is distorted by the market power of the press monopolies and the discriminatory subsidies of advertisers; how large numbers of journalists rely uncritically on official sources and a worn stock of images and stereotypes; and how government restricts freedom of debate both by authoritarian control on what can be published and by failing to reform the structure of the press”.¹⁷⁵ Smith also provided a thorough background to the newspaper revolution of the 1980s, pointing out that “computerisation has in less than a decade turned an ailing newspaper industry into a healthy one. It has created a new role for the newspaper, enabling it to meet the challenge of radio and TV”.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Martin¹⁷⁷ offered an account of the move towards computerised photocomposition in Fleet Street between 1975 and 1980, with particular emphasis on *The Financial Times*, Times Newspapers and Mirror Group Newspapers, and the industrial relations issues which the move evoked. Linton and Boston, acknowledged that their publication appeared “at a dramatic time of change in the national newspaper scene”,¹⁷⁸ in their provision of a detailed and annotated bibliography of “books, significant articles and research papers, special issues of newspapers, and directories and other trade publications”¹⁷⁹ concerning the British news press, whilst an online brief

¹⁷³ Sisson, Keith: *Industrial Relations in Fleet Street: a study in pay structure*.

¹⁷⁴ Engwall, Lars: *Newspapers as Organisations*.

¹⁷⁵ Curran, James (ed.): *The British Press: A Manifesto*, sleeve notes.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, Anthony: *Goodbye Gutenberg: The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s*, inside sleeve.

¹⁷⁷ Martin, Roderick: *New Technology and Industrial Relations in Fleet Street*.

¹⁷⁸ Linton, David and Ray Boston: *The Newspaper Press in Britain*, back cover.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

history of *The Guardian*¹⁸⁰ published by *The Guardian* itself, also confirms its major redesign in 1988.

A further collection of texts was identified which illuminated the nature and impact of changes in proprietorship of British newspapers during the 1980s. For example, Harold Evans, former editor of *The Times*, offered an autobiographical account of the impact of the ownership change and subsequent shift in editorial style at *The Times* newspaper during the 1980s. He described what he considered to be the negative effect of Rupert Murdoch's battle for and ownership of *The Times* such that:

"The difference at *The Times* between 1967 and 1982 lies in the character of the two owners, Roy Thomson and Rupert Murdoch... Thomson's most memorable quality was an instinct for truth... He meant what he said about the virtue of editorial independence and the duty of newspapers to serve their communities... Thomson's enduring contribution was to show how the profession of journalism might be carried on within the increasingly complex business of the press. For Murdoch the business of the press is more business for Murdoch. It is the subjugation of journalism to marketing and personal power-broking which is offensive; and this need not be a feature of an interventionist proprietor... The truth is that passing from Thomson was a transition from light to dark; and all of us involved were diminished by the shadows... Towards the end of the Thomson era the internal freedom was eroded by the guerrilla warfare of the print unions; there was a collapse of spirit at the top of the Thomson Organisation; and in 1981 the internal freedoms that had been enjoyed for twenty years fell under siege to Rupert Murdoch".¹⁸¹

After Murdoch's takeover he describes the new proprietorship as suffering from "a debilitating introspection about the role and identity of the paper".¹⁸² He argued that "Without internal freedom there is little hope of producing a newspaper of quality and none at all of challenging the external restraints".¹⁸³ Evans highlighted the shifts in proprietorial values by quoting Murdoch as informing his staff at *The Times* that "we are in the entertainment business".¹⁸⁴

Baistow's study of Fleet Street considered what he saw as the threat to the freedom of the press which resulted from 80 per cent of Britain's national newspapers being owned by only three owners. He examined "how the power of the print unions' autonomous chapels and their use of industrial blackmail have exacerbated the financial instability which has led to near-monopoly; the overwhelmingly right-wing bias that is distorting traditional democratic processes; the increasingly fierce battle for sales and advertising which has polarised the press between a tiny minority of quality papers and the mass-circulation tit-and-trash tabloids, eroding the ordinary readers' choice; how the

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/newsroom/story/0.11718.728443.00.html>. Accessed 08/08/2006.

¹⁸¹ Evans, Harold: *Good Times, Bad Times*, pp. 22-25.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

changeover to tabloid format has accelerated the decline into “junk journalism”.”¹⁸⁵ Jenkins¹⁸⁶ also described the turbulent nature of newspaper proprietorship and depicted both the chaos and wealth of the industry and identifying the winners and losers of the changes which occurred during the 1980s. Finally, Crozier¹⁸⁷ charted the evolution of *The Independent* newspaper from Andreas Whittam Smith’s original vision to the end of the first year of production. Crozier, a journalist who joined the venture in the early stages, detailed how the concept became a reality, describing the production and design processes involved and more importantly offered some detailed descriptions of the recruitment methods put in place to secure quality journalists. He also provides a clear description of events leading up to and including the Wapping Dispute of 1986.

Perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive account of the Wapping dispute itself was provided by Littleton, who described the changes within News International and events leading up to, during and after the events at Wapping, along with the history and development of industrial relations in Fleet Street and the political context for the dispute, referring to Thatcher as “the most influential individual paving the road to confrontation”,¹⁸⁸ and citing the significance of her “objective to reform trade unionism in Britain”.¹⁸⁹ A thorough and detailed insight into the industrial relations aspects of the newspaper and printing industries during the tremendous changes of the 1980s was also provided by Gennard and Bain¹⁹⁰ who examined the history of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades up to its merger with the National Graphical Association in 1991.

Post Wapping, several authors reflected upon the changes which British newspaper journalism had undergone, typically decrying a deterioration in the quality of the British press. Wintour for example, provided an in-depth study of Fleet Street, identifying “its rise and fall as a publishing centre and those personalities that were responsible for this rise – Northcliffe, Beaverbrook, Camrose, King and Thomson – and those that led to its demise – Murdoch, Maxwell and Shah”.¹⁹¹ Garland¹⁹², ex political cartoonist of *The Daily Telegraph*, offered insights into the departure of several key figures from that same publication who were to become involved in the creation of *The Independent* newspaper. Bailey and Williams¹⁹³ considered a series of extracts from journalists’ memoirs, which although not attributable to arts writers, provided a broader understanding of some of the personal, again mostly negative, responses and ethical tribulations aroused by the significant changes in the newspaper publishing climate in the 1980s.

¹⁸⁵ Baistow, Tom: *Fourth Rate Estate: An Anatomy of Fleet Street*, back cover.

¹⁸⁶ Jenkins, Simon: *The Market for Glory: Fleet Street Ownership in the 20th Century*.

¹⁸⁷ Crozier, Michael: *The Making of the Independent*.

¹⁸⁸ Littleton, Suellen: *The Wapping Dispute*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁹⁰ Gennard, John and Peter Bain: *A History of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades*.

¹⁹¹ Wintour, Charles: *The Rise and Fall of Fleet Street*, sleeve note.

¹⁹² Garland, Nicholas: *Not Many Dead: Journal of a Year in Fleet Street*.

¹⁹³ Bailey, Sally and Granville Williams: “Memoirs are made of this: Journalists’ memoirs in the United Kingdom 1945-95”.

In 1991, Curran and Sparks examined the relationship between the press and popular culture in order to rectify the relative absence of serious attention devoted to the examination of press entertainment content, which they argued “partly stems from the view that it is inherently trivial and unimportant. This view is based on the elitist assumption that most of what people read most of the time does not warrant critical study”.¹⁹⁴ In addition they suggest that “most researchers have been interested only in the political role of the press, and have assumed that its entertainment features are politically irrelevant. We argue that, on the contrary, press entertainment has an important ideological dimension which it makes no sense to ignore even within the conventional terms of reference of political analysis of the press”.¹⁹⁵ Based upon figures drawn from the BBC Audience Research Department and JICNARS statistics they highlight that in 1987 “the number of adults reading a daily paper, national or local, is not much less than the number who watch television on an average day”¹⁹⁶ thereby highlighting the significance of press consumption in British people’s cultural intake at that time. In relating the ideological ambiguities of entertainment to the British press, the authors argue that “the fit between the politics and entertainment of the right-wing press is not perfect. The development of a more partisan style of journalism has given rise to an increasingly propagandist inflection to tabloids’ explicitly political coverage”.¹⁹⁷ With regards to the political climate during the 1980s, the authors state that “the Thatcherite stress upon Victorian moral values, the sanctity of family life, the need for thrift, prudence and self-discipline – central to the authoritarianism of the new Right and explicitly endorsed in numerous tabloid leaders – do not have a consistent echo in the entertainment pages of the popular press.”¹⁹⁸

Examining the state of the English press in the late 1980s, and contributing to the debates concerning press standards, Snoddy¹⁹⁹ the then *Financial Times* media correspondent, presented material derived from interviews with proprietors Robert Maxwell, Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black, as well as journalists from both tabloid and quality newspapers in his consideration of media ethics. Later still, Tunstall examined the state of British national newspapers, both tabloid and broadsheet, after the so called ‘Death of Fleet Street’ in 1986 triggered by the influence of Rupert Murdoch, comparing the “Golden 1960s to 1990s super competition”.²⁰⁰ Tunstall considered the results of 200 interviews with senior newspaper personnel in the 1990s and observed that following the changes of the mid 1980s, newspaper competition had intensified “with more titles, fatter papers, more sections, and aggressive marketing. All areas of journalism – from sport to politics – have been transformed. A star system has developed for columnists and there is now a bigger and more powerful top echelon of senior executives, star writers, and section heads. The Editor has taken on a newly dominant role as impresario and entrepreneur”.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ Curran, James and Colin Sparks: “Press and Popular Culture”, p. 215.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Snoddy, Raymond: *The Good, The Bad and the Unacceptable*.

²⁰⁰ Tunstall, Jeremy: *Newspaper Power*, p. 31.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, back cover.

Richard Ingrams, the long-standing columnist for *The Observer*, revealed that his resignation from the publication in 2005 was as a direct result of what he perceived to be a decline in the editorial style of the newspaper after the Guardian Media Group bought the newspaper in 1993; his interviewer summarised that “Editorially, he considers the new owners to have progressively “dumbed down” the paper in search of an ill-defined “youth” readership, at the cost of its own distinct liberal, independent-minded identity... Exactly the same thing is happening with the *Sunday Telegraph*. Trying to appeal to young readers, [editors] give a huge amount of space to pop music, sex and rock ‘n’ roll, like they are the only things they want to read about”.²⁰² Ingrams cited the *Review* section as evidence of the newspapers intellectual decline, and specifically cites editor Robert McCrum’s decision to write about Bob Dylan in a recent edition of the newspaper as evidence of the poor state of affairs in the quality of *The Observer*.

The BBC Four documentary recalling the fortunes of *The Modern Review*, a magazine launched in 1991, provided a useful historical and contextual backdrop for understanding how, by the end of the period examined here, there appeared to be growing need for a publication which would allow popular culture to receive intelligent and serious criticism.²⁰³

Numerous biographies document the careers of newspaper proprietors prominent during the period covered by the thesis; biographies of Robert Maxwell are provided by Haines²⁰⁴ and Bower,²⁰⁵ whilst texts concerning Eddy Shah include those by Goodheart and Wintour²⁰⁶ and MacArthur²⁰⁷. Bellfield, Hird and Kelly²⁰⁸ document the career of Rupert Murdoch and provide a chapter detailing the Wapping Dispute and his purchase and proprietorship of *The Times*, whilst Shawcross²⁰⁹ offered similar coverage of Murdoch’s exploits with *The Times newspaper* and events at Wapping. Both Coleridge²¹⁰ and Brendon²¹¹ examine a broader collection of newspaper tycoons and press barons including Murdoch, Maxwell, Rothermere, Northcliffe.

In considering changes in journalism as a career, several texts provide useful insights. For example Tomalin suggested that:

“It is more difficult to get into journalism proper (by which, I’m afraid, I mean metropolitan national journalism) than it is to succeed once you are there...If you read the industry’s

²⁰² Rowan, David: “Interview: Richard Ingrams”, <http://www.davidrowan.com/2005/09/interview-Richard-Ingrams-Observer.html>. Accessed 24/1/06.

²⁰³ BBC Four: *When Toby Met Julie*.

²⁰⁴ Haines, Joe: *Maxwell*.

²⁰⁵ Bower, Tom: *Maxwell, the Outsider*.

²⁰⁶ Goodheart, David and Patrick Wintour: *Eddie Shah and the Newspaper Revolution*.

²⁰⁷ MacArthur, Brian: *Eddy Shah, Today and the Newspaper Revolution*.

²⁰⁸ Bellfield, Richard et al.: *Murdoch: The Decline of an Empire*.

²⁰⁹ Shawcross, William: *Murdoch*.

²¹⁰ Coleridge, Nicholas: *Paper Tigers: the latest, greatest newspaper tycoons and how they won the world*.

²¹¹ Brendon, Piers: *The Life and Death of the Press Barons*.

brochures you may imagine employers are searching for new talent, winnowing out contenders, and selecting the finest. In an intermittent undisciplined way this does go on occasionally, but the best editors are far too busy editing to bother with it. In practice what happens is that a constant stream of applicants are interviewed and forgotten, and no one thinks about hiring until a gap or sacking occurs. Then the first plausible candidate to turn up gets the job. Friends can help. The best Fleet Street newspapers are not the open-ended institutions they like to appear, but feudal fiefdoms all bound up in intimate friendships and shared values. All good publications are communities essentially cliquish and inward-looking; the best editors are good because they have the most talented friends. Therefore you need to cultivate like-mindedness, and pals at court...”²¹²

Tomalin also observed that whilst editors “demand an apprenticeship, examination results, and years of drudgery before we allow entrants a proper chance to show their talents...virtually all the really successful (and really good) journalists have somehow or other managed to escape such a cumbrous ordeal”.²¹³

Frith and Meech offer valuable insights into the career paths, training and education of graduates in journalism, albeit concentrating upon Scotland, at the beginning of the twenty first century; the authors highlight how, historically at least, young British journalists have received less relevant education and training than their American and European counterparts, whilst media employers and editors have also historically been distrustful of would-be entrants to the profession who possess an education, pointing out that “by the end of the 1990s there had developed a peculiar disjunction between the reality of how people did become journalists and the ideology of how they should become journalists, between the empirical evidence that journalism was now a career for graduates and the editorial suggestion that it should not be”.²¹⁴ The authors found that there was “little evidence of a career path leading from local newspapers to regional or UK national radio or television”,²¹⁵ and that those graduates who had studied English at University “appreciated a heightened awareness of the demands of written expression”.²¹⁶ Of particular relevance to this study were the authors’ findings that their participants had received very little or no training subsequent to their university education as their employers had not made any available. Of their sample of 50 graduates, only two reported ever having been employed on a retainer, whilst in terms of job dissatisfaction “frustration at being stuck in a rut or a post where promotion was unlikely was predictably mentioned, but only by a couple of people. Pay was scarcely referred to. The endemic instability of work in the media sector, caused especially by short-term contracts, was identified by only a couple of respondents, as were stress levels. For the remainder, the overwhelming majority, journalism is a fulfilling and enjoyable

²¹² Tomalin, Nicholas: “Stop the press I want to get on”, p. 175.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, at p. 176.

²¹⁴ Frith, Simon and Peter Meech: “Becoming a journalist: journalism education and journalism culture”, p. 139.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

occupation".²¹⁷ It is anticipated that such insights may offer a useful point for comparison with the practices which emerged during the 1980s.

In considering the employment conditions of music journalists, several texts outline what might be referred to as 'best practice' guidance, from a human resources perspective, against which it may be possible to consider the actual practices of broadsheet journalist employers. For example, in critiquing the means by which the journalists who participated in this study were appointed as broadsheet writers, the organisational strategies, processes and methods outlined by Pilbeam and Corbridge²¹⁸ provide a valuable benchmark, as do the perspectives offered by Marchington and Wilkinson²¹⁹ in considering the means by which journalists were 'managed' by their respective editors and their talent 'developed' through any formal training available from their broadsheet publishers. Similarly, the employment relationship between journalists and their respective broadsheets can also be scrutinised with reference to the models proposed by Salamon,²²⁰ in terms of industrial relations theories and best practice.

Several other sources were consulted as background guides, particularly to the academic fields of popular music, media and cultural studies including texts by Frith,²²¹ Middleton,²²² Brackett,²²³ Rojek,²²⁴ Khabaz,²²⁵ and Hesmondhalgh.²²⁶

1.3 Summary

This review has revealed that whilst a number of texts offer some consideration of broadsheet music criticism during the 1980s, the information available is scant, spread across a disparate range of sources, of inadequate breadth and depth and devoid of specific scholarly attention. Whilst many historical accounts dealing with the British music press and national press have cited the 1980s as a time of significant change, in terms of both the political and newspaper publishing climate, it is apparent that little work has been undertaken to understand the impact of this turbulent period upon broadsheet music criticism. Furthermore, whilst Frith in particular has provided many compelling personal insights relating to music criticism in the broadsheet press in the 1980s, there is a dearth of scholarly literature which seeks to examine the working experiences, values, motives or perspectives of the great many broadsheet music critics whose writing, during the 1980s and beyond, has populated countless pages of quality English newspapers. Despite their often substantial output, the significance

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 156–157.

²¹⁸ Pilbeam, Stephen and Marjorie Corbridge: *People Resourcing: Contemporary HRM in Practice*.

²¹⁹ Marchington, Mick and Adrian Wilkinson: *People Management and Development: Human Resource Management at Work*.

²²⁰ Salamon, Michael: *Industrial Relations Theory and Practice*.

²²¹ In particular Frith, Simon: *Music for Pleasure*; Frith, Simon: *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*; Frith, Simon: "Afterthoughts".

²²² Middleton, Richard: *Studying Popular Music*.

²²³ Brackett, David: *Interpreting Popular Music*.

²²⁴ Rojek, Chris: *Cultural Studies*.

²²⁵ Khabaz, David: *Manufactured Schema: Thatcher, the miners and the culture industry*.

²²⁶ Hesmondhalgh, David: *The Cultural Industries*.

and position of broadsheet music journalists within the history of music criticism appears to have been almost completely overshadowed by the canonisation of numerous writers from the British and American specialist music press, at least in the UK.

Many of the commentators cited in this chapter have conveyed concerns alluding to an omnipresent deterioration in British critical standards during the period under review, however it appears that, as yet, no attempts have been made to substantiate these claims, and certainly not from a quantitative perspective. The appropriateness of different modes of critical discourse, suitable for application to the study of popular culture, appears to have been much debated, particularly the dichotomy of academic and non academic, or serious and non-serious writing; however the critical styles adopted specifically by broadsheet writers, across the full spectrum of genres and across different periods of time, have received little attention, at least in terms of any detailed discourse analysis.

As no single source currently exists which addresses these issues, the inspection of existing literature summarised in this chapter has necessitated reference to a wide range of sources, namely mainstream press and specialist music press articles, single and multi-author collections of works and anthologies – both scholarly and otherwise, academic texts including journals (spanning musicological, cultural, media, employment or sociological concerns) and personal accounts from individuals involved within the media through their biographies and autobiographies. Whilst these each hold their relative merits in terms of the different perspectives they invoke, many such texts have inherent limitations; for example, as Schudson acknowledges, autobiographies “provide direct evidence not of the life of the writer but of how the writer conceives of his life”,²²⁷ whilst press articles are imbued not only with the bias of their authors but also that of their editors and publishing institutions.

This review of literature has highlighted the distinct absence of any academic attention devoted specifically to the study of broadsheet music criticism, and not least to the ways in which it may have been affected by the turbulent events of the 1980s. Without research in this field, any future historio-reflective work which attempts to address English music criticism from the 1980s onwards must surely be incomplete. As such, the research set out in this thesis intends to fill this void and, in doing so, make an independent and original contribution to the field, by means of a systematic and transparent examination of broadsheet music writing between 1981 and 1991.

²²⁷ Schudson, Michael: “What is a reporter? The private faces of public journalism”, p. 229.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Introduction

A multi-method approach known as *triangulation* formed the basis of this methodology. Seale stated that “**triangulation** is to compare different kinds of data from different sources to see whether they corroborate one another. So data relating to the same phenomenon are compared but derive from different phases of fieldwork, different points in time, accounts of different participants, or using different methods of data collection”,²²⁸ whilst Arksey and Knight add that “triangulation serves two main purposes: confirmation... and completeness”.²²⁹ As such, three different sources of data were used in this research, namely a) specific historical newspapers and magazines b) interviews with music journalists and c) other relevant primary and secondary sources. These three sources and the range of methods employed in selecting, gathering, recording and analysing data from each are detailed respectively in the remainder of this chapter, and summarised below alongside their associated numbered subheadings:

Table 1. Overview of methodology

Section reference and data source	Method for selecting and gathering data	Method for recording data	Method for analysing data
2.2 Historical newspapers and magazines	Purposive sampling. Reading hard copies of selected publications.	i) Entry into a tailor-made database. ii) Categorisation of article contents followed by thematic analysis.	i) Quantitative analysis of results. ii) Qualitative analysis of samples.
2.3 Music journalists	Quota sampling. Interviews with music journalists.	Audio recording. Transcription of interviews.	Thematic critical analysis of transcriptions.
2.4 Other relevant primary & secondary sources	Exploring library databases, bibliographies of related texts and material recommended by other parties (including interviewees).	Referenced in the main text of the thesis where relevant.	Critical assessment.

²²⁸ Seale, Clive (ed.): *Researching Society and Culture*, p. 231.

²²⁹ Arksey, Hilary and Peter Knight: *Interviewing for Social Scientists*, p. 21.

Primarily, this research is of an exploratory nature, and therefore an interpretative approach has been adopted when dealing with the research findings. The research is predominantly located within the cultural and sociological study of popular music and musicology, however it embraces a multidisciplinary approach; the research findings relating to developments within the publishing environment refer to the disciplines of Publishing and Media Studies, the qualitative analysis of newspaper articles was inspired by a critical discourse analysis approach drawn from the English Studies discipline, and the analysis of journalists' employment conditions refers to theories and models derived from Human Resource Management theory.

Research for an earlier Masters Degree suggested that the Wapping Dispute, the launch of the *Independent* newspaper, and to some extent the arrival of *Q* magazine, all occurring in 1986, were inextricably linked to developments in music criticism across the broadsheet press; consequently 1986 was adopted as the pivotal year when defining the scope of this project. The overall time frame to be investigated was then established following the review of relevant literature and an informal interview with an expert external advisor (namely a *Times* newspaper music journalist and Radio 3 presenter who also holds a Ph.D. in a related area),²³⁰ the results of which suggested that a five year period either side of 1986 would be appropriate.

2.2. Historical newspapers and magazines

2.2.1. Method for selecting and gathering data

The first set of primary data was obtained from historical copies of English broadsheet newspapers from the period 1981 to 1991, accessed from archives in hard copy.²³¹ The broadsheet newspapers included within the scope of this project (note that Sunday supplements were included where in existence), are listed below.

Daily broadsheets: *The Guardian, The Times, The Independent*²³²

Sunday broadsheets: *The Observer, The Sunday Times, The Independent on Sunday*

These selected broadsheets were considered to represent adequately the spectrum of editorial bias, from liberal to conservative, thus ensuring results which would not be unduly influenced by one particular political perspective.

²³⁰ Informal interview conducted with Alyn Shipton at his home on 14th January 2005.

²³¹ All hard copies were accessed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in the first instance. Where issues were not available, incomplete or illegible then hard copies were accessed from the British Library archives, London. In the very few instances where hard copies of newspapers were missing from archives, data was gathered via microfilm and measurements of adverts estimated by comparing sizes with known measurements taken from hard copies.

²³² Following its launch on 7th October 1986.

With specific regards to *The Guardian*, it became apparent (by comparing the results obtained for the aforementioned Masters degree) that two different versions of the newspaper existed; not only was the newspaper *printed* in London and Manchester but the contents of the arts pages were tailored, at least in part, towards local event coverage. In order to assess the extent of variance and select the version to be included in this study, the contents of the first two weeks editions of both the London and Manchester versions were compared from the beginning (1981), middle (1986) and end (1991) of the period in question. This exercise revealed that the quantity of music coverage in both editions remained very similar overall and that approximately 50% of the music articles observed were common to both editions. After examining the remaining articles, i.e. those appearing exclusively in only one edition, genre coverage in the Manchester version appeared slightly less diverse, and as all other newspapers included in this study were London based, the London edition was adopted on the basis of both its genre breadth and comparability.

Several other potential titles were excluded from the main body of research as follows; *The Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *The Correspondent* were not included due to both the time constraints of this study and the fact that the content of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* were considered likely to be of a similarly conservative nature to *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, hence this perspective would be represented elsewhere, whilst *The Correspondent* was in circulation between 17th September 1990 and 25th November 1990 when it ceased circulation and hence any data available from it would not be comparable to other broadsheets over an extended period. Furthermore, as the average issue readership of *The Daily Telegraph* was considerably higher than that of *The Times*, during the 1980s (Appendix A), it was considered less suitable for comparison with *The Guardian*. Broadsheets published elsewhere in the UK, such as the *Scotsman*, *Western Mail* and *Irish Independent*, were also excluded for reasons of research pragmatism. *The Financial Times* was excluded on the basis that its specialist nature may result in a particular readership and content, which might undermine comparisons with other broadsheets. English tabloid newspapers were excluded firstly for reasons of research pragmatism, and secondly because an initial survey of the two English tabloids with the highest readership during the period, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* (Appendix A), revealed that their gossip-based agenda precluded any serious attempt at music criticism. Since developments within the specialist music press during the latter half of the twentieth century have received significant attention over recent years (for example as in Jones, Frith, Gudmundsson et al., Gorman, Théberge and Toynbee),²³³ the specialist music press was also excluded. Finally, fanzines were also excluded on the basis that, as a result of their distinctive character, they would warrant a separate detailed analysis.

²³³ Jones, Steve: *Pop Music and the Press*; Frith, Simon: *Sound Effects*, pp. 165-177; Frith, Simon: "Fragments of a Sociology of Rock Criticism", pp. 235-246; Gudmundsson, Gestur et al., "Brit Crit: Turning Points in British Rock Criticism", pp. 41-64; Gorman, Paul: *In Their Own Write*; Théberge, Paul: "Musicians' Magazines in the 1980's: The Creation of a Community and a Consumer Market", pp. 270-293; Toynbee, Jason: "Policing Bohemia, pinning up grunge: the music press and generic change in British pop and rock", pp. 289-300.

Although the research aimed to track changes in music criticism over an eleven year period it was recognised, again in view of the time and resource limitations of the project, that it would only be possible to analyse a sample of the chosen newspapers. A 'slice' approach was therefore adopted, which David and Sutton refer to as "purposive or theoretical sampling (where) the units are selected according to the researcher's own knowledge and opinion about which ones they think will be appropriate to the topic area".²³⁴ March editions of each newspaper were chosen for the sample group since they avoided Christmas and summer during which additional advertising material, e.g. for music festivals and concerts, may have created a less representative sample which would undermine subsequent generalisations when drawing up the research conclusions.

The publications were approached chronologically, with data from each newspaper gathered one year at a time, progressing from 1981 to 1991. Only material gained from the first four editions of Sunday newspapers each year (as some years contained five Sunday editions) and the first twenty four editions of daily newspapers for each year (based upon four weeks of newspapers with six editions per week) was gathered in order to achieve comparability across the year groups, resulting in a total sample group of 744 editions (see Appendix B). Data collection began with the Sunday newspapers since this smaller subset was deemed more suitable for trials since any resulting changes to the methodology could be implemented more easily and modelling of the outputs could also be conducted more quickly.

It was acknowledged that this sampling approach carried two key drawbacks. Firstly, as eleven twelfths of the available data for each year was excluded, generalisations made from the sample group bore inherent limitations; with additional time and resources reference to two or more twelfths may have enhanced the reliability of the results. Secondly, it could be argued that the selected month cannot offer a true representation of any given publication over a twelve month period; however it was decided that as broadsheet size remains relatively consistent throughout the year, and for the reasons stated above, March would provide results which were broadly consistent with the majority of other months. On balance, this method provided a practical solution and sound basis for consistency for the required quantitative and qualitative analyses. Furthermore, in practice, the chronological approach helped highlight to the researcher (visually) any significant differences within publications as the decade progressed. Due to the large volume of newspapers included there is the unfortunate, yet inevitable, possibility that despite the researcher's best efforts some music-related articles will have been inadvertently overlooked during the data capture exercise, although a significant degree of quality checking was conducted as a result of subsequent requirements to revisit the original hard copies, e.g. for genre re-classifications and word count calculations, as detailed below (see sections 2.2.2.e and 2.2.3.1).

²³⁴ David, Matthew and Carole Sutton: *Social Research – The Basics*, p. 152.

2.2.2 Method for recording data

As the chosen sampling method would clearly generate several thousand data records, a computerised database was deemed necessary. Research was conducted to identify an appropriate database design process and to understand the relevant technical considerations. Rob and Coronel's Database Lifecycle Model,²³⁵ despite being directed towards business readers, easily translated into a set of generic steps which were applied to this study, as below:

a) Analysis of requirements and constraints

A Database Specification, outlining the purpose, audience, content, required outputs of the database and constraints was documented (Appendix C) which then informed several later design decisions.

b) Database design and software selection

In view of the resource and financial constraints of this research two possible software solutions emerged, namely Microsoft Access XP and Microsoft Excel XP. In order to select the final database solution "criteria considered to be 'critical' to a successful implementation"²³⁶ were identified, against which a comparative analysis of the two potential software solutions was undertaken (Appendix D). Since a weighted scoring system seemed excessive to the requirements of this study, a simple un-weighted scoring system was devised. As both packages were Microsoft derived, both were deemed equally compatible with future technologies and equally suitable for transferring data to other Microsoft software programs, so these features were not assessed. The results of the comparative analysis rendered Excel XP most appropriate, an outcome confirmed through subsequent discussions with existing users of both software packages. As the database consisted mainly of lists, the use of a complex relational database provided by Access was difficult to justify, particularly since Excel, although a flat-file database, provided sorting and filtering capabilities as a suitable alternative for connecting groups of data.

With the software solution identified, the terminology describing the various components of the database was then conceived, as follows:

Database	The spreadsheets containing the data collected.
Field	The column headings within the database.
Record	A row of data relating to one particular entry (e.g. article or advertisement) within any given publication.
Cell	An individual data entry area corresponding to one field and one record within the database.

²³⁵ Rob, Peter and Carlos Coronel: *Database Systems – Design, Implementation and Management*, p. 326.

²³⁶ Connolly, Thomas and Carolyn Begg, *Database Systems – A Practical Approach to Design, Implementation and Management*, p. 285.

The requirements set out in the Database Specification were then used as a basis for the physical design of the database; the 'data fields' became the field headings, separate rows were devoted to individual newspaper articles (or 'records') and the 'lists of valid responses' became validation criteria in the appropriate cells.

c) Loading and implementation

As the software was already loaded on the researcher's personal computer, the physical implementation of the theoretical design proceeded immediately. Ulrich points out that "simple as Excel is to use in building and maintaining a database, it does have some rules. If you don't follow them, your ability to sort, filter and report on your data will be compromised";²³⁷ as such many of Ulrich's rules²³⁸ were observed to protect the integrity of the research, including the creation of a single line of field names in the top row, avoidance of blank rows, consistent spelling, capitalisation and abbreviation, and records broken down into as many individual fields as possible to generate more filtering and sorting options.

It was recognised that the database architecture needed protecting from accidental or purposeful damage which could potentially threaten the reliability and validity of the database, such as "hardware failure...software errors...user errors...concurrency errors...deliberate damage (and) data theft",²³⁹ as such appropriate measures (Appendix E) were taken to enhance both security, i.e. the "protection of data against unauthorised disclosure, alteration, or destruction"²⁴⁰ and integrity, i.e. "the *accuracy* or *correctness* of data in the database".²⁴¹

To further guard against user errors, detailed Data Input Rules were also generated to help ensure consistency and accuracy during data collection (Appendix F). It was acknowledged that the application of some of these rules, such as the classification of music genre, performance genre and article type, relied upon the researcher's subjectivity and therefore potentially undermined the validity and reliability of the data. As such, where some aspect of classification was ambiguous at the time of data entry a temporary value of '?' would be recorded, subsequent to which specific research was conducted or the advice of a knowledgeable second party was sought in order to clarify anomalies and reinforce reliability before the final data record was established and the temporary '?' entry removed.

It was accepted that the adoption of a compulsory 'my genre' classification category may have introduced an element of bias towards classical music since the emerging nature of rock, pop, crossover and roots music sometimes resulted in editors classifying the same artist or music under different genre subheadings (as discussed further on p. 58) thus generating less-clear cut results during the database analysis; inevitably the long-established and distinctive nature of broadsheet classical

²³⁷ Ulrich, Laurie: *How to Do Everything with Office XP*, p. 303.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

²³⁹ Warrender, Robert: *Databases*, p. 83.

²⁴⁰ Date, C. J.: *An Introduction to Database Systems*, p. 504.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

music coverage made it far more conducive to categorisation. However, the requirement that each entry be assigned a 'my genre' classification ensured that the quantitative data analysis included *all* database entries; had this rule not been enacted then many hundreds of data entries would have been excluded from the analysis which would have been counterproductive to the aims of this research.

d) Testing and evaluation

The Arts and Humanities Data Service advise that a "formal piloting stage...can be especially worthwhile"²⁴² while Connolly and Begg recommend undertaking "carefully planned test strategies and realistic data so that the entire testing process is methodically and rigorously carried out",²⁴³ therefore a series of trials were conducted to check that examples of data from each broadsheet could be adequately and easily accommodated within the database structure. The trial revealed that some minor modifications to the database would improve the quality of the results, namely the creation of a new field to distinguish musical genre from performance mode, and the addition of new validation criteria to accurately record articles whose content bridged two or more types of article. The Database Specification was amended to reflect these changes. Testing of the 'sort' and 'filter' functions confirmed suitability for data analysis.

e) Operation

The data was then entered into the database, over the course of approximately nine months. Towards the end of the data collection process, a number of small changes were made to the database in order to improve the quality of information to be gained during subsequent analysis, as follows.

Firstly, it was recognised that music written by certain composers did not comfortably reside within either the classical or contemporary genres, and therefore a new category of 'contemporary classical' was created to both accommodate those articles relating to such composers more appropriately and to prevent their otherwise uneven distribution from skewing the results for the classical and contemporary music analysis. By creating this new category it was also anticipated that it would be possible to establish whether certain journalists were assigned to perhaps more critically challenging material within the classical genre. Entries were re-classified by referring to a working list showing each composer's genre classification (which also helped ensure consistency); composers considered suitable for reclassification to 'contemporary classical' included Elizabeth Lutyens, Pierre Boulez, John Cage and Dominic Muldowney (a full list can be found at Appendix G).

The new 'contemporary classical' category was added to the 'My Genre' column only, since it had been observed that the publications themselves made little or no reference to this hybrid genre and time restrictions prevented revisiting all articles to seek out exceptional cases. In addition, the data entry rule whereby 'My Genre' always reflected any genre specified by the editor in the 'Editor's

²⁴² <http://www.ahds.ac.uk/creating/information-papers/creating-introduction/index.htm>. Accessed 12/03/2004.

²⁴³ Connolly, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

Genre' column was still observed, hence some entries, despite fulfilling the criteria for reclassification to 'contemporary classical' were not amended. Whilst this created internal inconsistencies (i.e. one composer could appear in both the 'contemporary classical' and 'contemporary' or 'classical' genres), overriding the principle of following the Editor's genre in these instances would have necessitated similar action for all other genres, thus potentially endangering the consistency and accuracy of many other entries.

Reassigning the data entries affected by this change had the effect of generating nine additional data entries (six additional Sunday entries and three additional daily entries); a consequence of splitting existing entries containing references to multiple composers, one or more of which being reclassified as contemporary classical. As these changes resulted from the splitting of existing articles, rather than addition of new articles, it was decided that there was relatively little value in adding the new entries to the word count sample groups (described in section 2.2.3.1).

Secondly, during data collection from the daily newspapers it became at times difficult to distinguish event guides from previews. This problem was particularly apparent in *The Times* newspaper where the format of certain recurring articles, originally considered to be fairly clear examples of event guides or previews during the early 1980s, changed such that their 'article type' took on characteristics of the other (see Appendices H and I). In light of these known problems, an exercise was undertaken to identify instances where similar inconsistencies between the classification of event guides and previews may have occurred within other publications. All event guides and previews within the database were scrutinised on the basis that event guides would not normally have an author or word count attributed to them, whereas previews would (although some exceptions were identified and accepted) and therefore event guides and previews with unexpected author or word count characteristics (as appropriate) and which did not form part of a regular pattern were reviewed and reclassified wherever appropriate. Only a handful of entries from newspapers other than *The Times* were reclassified from preview to event guide (or vice versa) including entries titled 'Critic's Choice' (1986) and 'Music Choice' (1990) in the *Sunday Times*.

Two other minor problems with event guides and previews were noted. Firstly, some publications included an article which began as a preview of a particular performance but concluded, often represented visually by a change to smaller font size, into an event guide listing. Where this occurred, it is possible that inconsistencies (either within or between publications) may have occurred in terms of whether or not the small font text had been included in the overall article word count. Time constraints prevented the checking of all previews, however notes had been entered in the 'other information' field indicating the approach taken in many cases, hence further research was not considered viable or necessary. Secondly, throughout the data collection process numerous articles had been observed which read as reviews but which concluded with details of the remaining dates of a particular performance. It is possible that some of these had been recorded as reviews (reflecting the main thrust of the article) or as previews (reflecting the possible motivation for the inclusion of the

article). Again, time did not permit detailed re-reading of each review and preview, however it was anticipated that any increase in reviews becoming stylistically more akin to previews would be explored more fully in the interviews.

Thirdly, it was observed that a number of inconsistencies existed whereby the same piece of music had been assigned to a different performance mode or genre category. In terms of the former it was possible to perform keyword searches in order to identify and reclassify erroneous entries, for example '*Bach's Passions*', which had originally been recorded either as 'choral', 'opera' or 'mixed' (instrumental or vocal) were identified by searching for 'Bach' and 'Passion' and then reclassified as 'choral' to improve accuracy and consistency. However, as no detailed 'performance mode' analysis was planned, other than using it to distinguish opera and musical theatre from other classical performance modes, extensive checking was not considered an appropriate use of research resources.

Resolving genre inconsistencies was slightly more problematic since these often resulted directly from the way that editors, either in the same publication or from different publications and from different years, presented the same piece of music or performers. Furthermore, where different editors had specified different genres it was also difficult to maintain consistency in relation to articles referring to the same music or performers with no 'Editor's genre'. As inconsistencies between classical and contemporary music had been addressed during the creation of the new 'contemporary classical' category (described above), this issue applied mainly to rock, pop, crossover and roots genre classifications.

It was decided that inconsistencies occurring as a result of differences between editor's genres should be preserved since they offered valuable insights into the way that rock, pop, crossover and roots were perceived over time and highlighted instances where performers might have actually changed genre. However, where inconsistencies arose within 'My genre', with or without further clashes with one or more classifications under 'Editor's genre', the following options were considered:

1. Preserve the integrity of the original database, including inconsistencies, but group all rock and pop (and possibly all roots and crossover) articles into a hybrid category: 'rock and pop'.
2. Change the 'My genre' inconsistencies to reflect a) the genre assigned to the music or performer in the majority of cases, or b) the genre assigned to the music or performer in nearest entry (chronologically), in either the same or any other publication.
3. Extract and review a list of identifiable inconsistencies and agree the most appropriate genre classification with a knowledgeable second party.

A combination of the first and third options was considered preferable. By adopting the first option rock, pop, crossover and roots articles could be grouped together into one category during analysis (and then broken down into the separate genre components) wherever considered beneficial to do so, whilst acknowledging that a small number of performers would appear in more than one genre sub-

group. This approach would also limit the extent to which having the same music or performer in more than one genre could skew the final results, whilst still making it possible to identify any general growth or decline within each genre category. This approach was combined with the third option since it was considered more advantageous than simply preserving original data whose quality had not been challenged, and more importantly it would help reduce researcher subjectivity.

As such, after making a copy of the database and deleting rows to which these potential changes would not apply (event guides, obituaries, charts, competitions, publications containing 'no music reviews', entries with genre classifications of 'n/a', classical, contemporary, classical contemporary and early) it was then possible to examine rows lacking an 'Editor's genre' in order to identify music and performers in each and then search the remainder of the database to identify inconsistencies. Two measures were then taken; firstly wherever 'My genre' clashed with a consistent genre classification by one or more editors, 'My genre' was amended to improve consistency; secondly, any conflicts between editor's and/or my genre were placed in a new worksheet for discussion with a knowledgeable second party.

Whilst the first measure improved consistency, it resulted in some questionable outcomes. For example, all editors had classified Jimmy Somerville as rock, and therefore the single entry without an 'Editor's genre' was classified as rock in 'My genre' (the same applied to Elkie Brookes, Howard Jones, Cherelle, Joan Baez, Tanita Tikaram). However, without such an editorial classification elsewhere some or all of these artists may have been classed as pop, in line with similar acts in the database. Particular artists also presented problems, for example Tina Turner, who arguably would have begun as a soul singer and later evolved into a mainstream pop act, was classified as rock by editors elsewhere in the database which was therefore reflected in 'My genre', despite the fact that an alternative classification of roots or pop might have been more appropriate.

Difficulties also arose when reviewing 'easy listening' artists including Eartha Kitt, Marvin Hamlisch, Dionne Warwick and Shirley Bassey, and also singer songwriters including Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell and Randy Newman. Furthermore, where two or more different 'Editor's genre' classifications had been applied to the same performer/s, and where a decision was then required for an entry concerning that same performer/s but where no 'Editor's genre' was given, this sometimes had the effect of introducing a third genre classification for the same musician/s; known inconsistencies of this type include Lionel Richie (rock, pop and roots) Attila the Stockbroker (rock, pop and roots), Penguin Café Orchestra (rock, pop and crossover), Cowboy Junkies (rock, pop and roots). However, by discussing each of these issues with the second party it was possible to agree the most appropriate genre classification and therefore improve the reliability of the decisions taken.

It was recognised that these genre issues were resolved from a modern day perspective and that classifications may have differed had this exercise been conducted during the period under review; for example Level 42, Eurythmics, Sting, Talk Talk, Depeche Mode, Everything But the Girl and

Fairground Attraction may have been classified as 'rock' during the 1980s but as 'pop' at the time of this research, with the benefit of hindsight. The band Madness, who began their career as a roots-based rock band, but who achieved increasing mainstream success during the 1980s would now arguably be described as a pop act (similar reclassifications might also apply to Clannad and to REM). Similarly, a number of old rock and roll artists, e.g. Little Richard, The Crickets, Temptations, who arguably could have been placed within the roots category, have been classified as pop since in the 1980s they would have been re-released as nostalgic pop acts. This exercise revealed the limitations and difficulties of applying the concept of genre to a quantitative research exercise.

It was acknowledged that by changing records retrospectively, and only in cases where sufficient data had been recorded to enable this (e.g. there had been no requirement to record the names of performers or composers during data entry), some records which should have been changed or updated may have gone undetected and therefore remain classified in a way which does not reflect their attributes most accurately. In addition, some of these changes may have affected the calculations conducted earlier on to establish the estimated number of words per article. However, as recalculating word counts and revisiting large quantities of articles was likely to jeopardise the timely completion of the project as a whole, it was not considered a beneficial use of research resources relative to any potential gains to be achieved. Furthermore, on balance, it was felt that the database had contained sufficient information to re-appraise the majority of entries where necessary.

During this work, a handful of inconsistencies and errors were noted in respect of data which had already been used in earlier analysis. In these instances, wherever practical to do so, any corrections were applied retrospectively to the data used in previous analysis, although where this would have caused significant amounts of reworking (e.g. as a result of a new line of data invalidating all cell references used in formulae for earlier graphs) the corrections to previous work were not applied due to time constraints. However, as such occurrences were minimal they were not considered likely to have a significant effect on the overall results.

As it was not possible to assess each piece of music aurally, or research its' individual nature, before determining the most appropriate genre category, music articles have been categorised by subjective assessment of the genre with which the performer or composer, as appropriate, is most commonly associated. With hindsight, fields might have been added to the database to necessitate the capture of composers and performers names to a) improve transparency, such that the basis for subjective genre decisions made, in the absence of an 'Editor's genre', might be better understood, and b) to enable retrospective corrections and category changes to be applied more easily. However, as the vast majority of database entries did not require reclassification, the issues acknowledged here were not considered to have undermined the overall integrity of the research.

Upon completion of the data entry phase, and subsequent application of the estimated word counts (described in 2.2.3.1), one large database existed containing two worksheets; one each for material

extracted from daily and Sunday publications. This was saved to hard disk, password protected and copied to CD (Appendix J).

f) Maintenance and evolution

Upon completion, each row and column of the database was checked and any obvious anomalies identified and corrected.

2.2.3 Method for analysing data

The database contents were then subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis as detailed below.

2.2.3.1 Quantitative analysis

In order to uncover and explore relationships within and across publications, quantitative analysis was achieved by copying, into a new spreadsheet, and sorting the data fields and by counting and totalling the results, using tools available within the selected software. Each analysis exercise addressed a different research question (see Chapter 3).

As the trial journalist interview revealed that remuneration within the profession was often based upon the number of words published, it was decided that the quantitative estimates of music coverage from different genres should be generated not only in terms of numbers of articles but also through calculating the number of words per article. Since manually counting the number of words contained within each article across the selected eleven year period was not possible, given the resource constraints of this study, a means of estimating article lengths was required to achieve this specific quantitative analysis requirement. A full explanation of the methods adopted for this purpose is provided in Appendix K.

Due to the size of the analysis reports generated, most of the results were expressed graphically, using line, bar and pie charts in order to highlight trends and facilitate comparisons; the key results from which are presented in Chapter 3.

2.2.3.2. Qualitative analysis

Whilst the methods described above provided valuable results, the constraints of adopting a purely quantitative approach were recognised, as May confirms:

“This method considers product and says little about process...it deals only with what has been produced and not the decisions which informed its production which tell us so much about its received and intended meanings. Second, an empiricist problem is raised for it deals only with information that can be measured and standardised”.²⁴⁴

As such, and in order to further triangulate the results obtained from the journalist interviews and secondary sources, and in order to counterbalance the methodological constraints of each, a sample of music related articles were selected for detailed content analysis (although this evoked some basic quantitative terminology, for example when assessing the extent of specialised musical terminology within each genre category). Initially, a critical discourse analysis approach was considered, based upon an adapted model for critical reading proposed by Wallace²⁴⁵ which itself was based upon a ‘discourse analysis’ approach deriving from the work of Norman Fairclough.²⁴⁶ However, it soon became apparent that the application of this model produced results which were unnecessarily detailed and irrelevant for the purposes of this study. In searching for alternative models or templates, an approach proposed by Toynbee was identified as a means of providing more relevant outcomes; Toynbee argues that “Content analysis can be said to involve four main stages... 1 Formulating a *problem* or question. 2 Deciding on the range and size of a *sample*. 3 *Counting* within that sample, and coding the data. 4 *Interpreting* (and writing up) the data”.²⁴⁷ These four stages were adopted for the purpose of this research, resulting in the creation and application of a custom-built template by which the content of a sample of music review articles were critically analysed, as follows.

Firstly, since the journalist interviews had brought to light several issues concerning changes in article content between 1981 and 1991, a series of questions or hypotheses were formulated by assuming that changes *did* occur and that different styles of writing *did* exist, across different genres and publications, which then directed the focus of the analysis upon their identification. Whilst this method involved a degree of subjectivity, as indeed might any form of content analysis, it ensured a more focussed, informed (having been inflected by the journalist interview outcomes) and relevant strategy than might otherwise have been delivered through a broader approach.

Secondly, since as Bernard points out that in determining the range and size of sample the general rule is “If your objective is to generalize about individual characteristics from a sample to a population,

²⁴⁴ May, Tim: *Social Research; Issues Methods and Process*, p. 192.

²⁴⁵ Wallace, Catherine: “Critical Literacy Awareness in the EFL Classroom”, pp. 50-81.

²⁴⁶ Fairclough, Norman: *Language and Power*.

²⁴⁷ Toynbee, Jason: *Analysing Media Texts*, p. 142.

then use probability sampling”,²⁴⁸ various types of probability sample were considered, namely a) simple random sampling b) systematic random sampling and c) stratified random sampling; the latter of which was deemed most appropriate as it would ensure that key subpopulations could be included. In order to achieve a stratified random sample Bernard states that “you divide a population (a sampling frame) into subpopulations (subframes), based on key independent variables, and then take a random (unbiased) sample from each of those subpopulations”,²⁴⁹ and as such it was decided that the sample frame, namely the completed database, would be divided into stratified sample groups by the most logical characterizing variables, comprising of the newspaper title, year of publication and genre. Whilst this method could be criticised on the grounds that the size of the sample taken from within each stratified group was not proportionate to the overall size of the stratified group (only one sample was taken from each publication, year and genre), or that the choice of characterising variables could have been defined differently, these weaknesses were outweighed by significant advantages, in terms of minimising researcher subjectivity, ensuring maximum relevance and sample sizes which were conducive to comparative analysis (i.e. a single jazz article could be compared to a single classical article from the same publication and, or, year).

In constructing the stratified sample groups a copy of the full newspaper database was edited such that only entries relevant to the required characterising variables remained. This editing process involved the deletion and reorganisation of certain data; firstly, in order to more clearly highlight the nature of any stylistic changes which occurred over the period 1981 to 1991 it was decided that the sample texts should be taken only from the beginning, middle and end of the period under review, i.e. 1981, 1987 and 1991 (1987 was considered a more appropriate mid-point than 1986 since it facilitated the inclusion of *The Independent*). Secondly, for each of the three selected years articles from the following genres were grouped for inclusion as follows:

- 1) Classical, early, contemporary and contemporary classical were grouped since they were considered to represent what might traditionally be referred to as ‘high art’, involving performance modes which were likely to be similar. Opera was excluded from the qualitative analysis since the very nature of this performance mode seemed likely to engender either a different style of writing or focus upon different performance qualities than would other classical and contemporary performance modes. Furthermore, the inclusion of opera as a separate category would generate unwieldy volumes of data which might threaten the timely completion of the project.
- 2) Rock and pop were combined to represent ‘popular’ music in the broader sense.
- 3) Jazz was kept as a distinct category as the journalist interviews suggested its anomalous position and also to acknowledge its own historical musical tradition.

²⁴⁸ Bernard, Russell: *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, p. 147.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

- 4) Roots music was also treated as a distinct category in view of the historical musical traditions involved and in response to the findings of the journalist interviews which suggested the emergence of the genre, especially the coverage of world music, during the period examined.

All articles classified as 'crossover' were excluded since it was anticipated that the style of criticism applied in these articles may reflect more than one genre style therefore hindering comparison within this group.

Thirdly, it was decided that only articles recorded as 'reviews' should be included, again to maximise comparability of the samples, but also since this particular article type was present throughout the period and could potentially provide a valuable basis for examining critical style. It was further decided that the reviews should relate only to live music events, since it was anticipated that the critical discourse analysis would explore the context for the music including references to the audience for each genre, and that where a selected article referred to multiple live events then only the text relating the first event, unless written non-consecutively in such a way as to compare and contrast two or more events, would be analysed in order to both maximise comparability and ensure that the scale of the analysis exercise remained manageable.

Once the final stratified sample groups had been prepared, each entry (article per row) within each stratified sample group was accorded a number, ascending from 1 upwards, and samples were selected by referring to a table of random numbers (Appendix L), based on the last one or two digits (as appropriate) from each five digit number, at a haphazardly chosen entry point each time (since Bernard²⁵⁰ points out that entering such a table at the same point each time would result in the sample ceasing to be random). In total one article from each of the three selected years, four genre groups and six publications needed to be randomly selected (magazine supplements were excluded for pragmatic reasons and because the size of the articles in such publications were often larger than those appearing in the newspapers making comparison more difficult); culminating in a total potential sample of 60 articles.

However, upon preparation of the sample frames a number of limitations were discovered, namely that in two instances only one review existed in a particular sample frame (jazz in *The Sunday Times* 1987 and jazz in *The Independent on Sunday* 1991) in which case the single existing article was automatically selected. Similarly, in several instances a sample review for a particular genre category, publication and year did not exist and in other cases, upon accessing the randomly selected samples from microfilm, it transpired that only record reviews were available. In light of these limitations, from the original intended sample group of 60 articles it was only possible to obtain 38 samples (see Appendix M), and whilst this resulted in slightly larger sample groups for classical (14) and rock and

²⁵⁰ Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

pop (12) than for jazz (8) and roots (4), by virtue of their degree of presence within the database, and reduced the scope for cross genre, year or publication comparison in some sample groups, the sample size was still considered appropriate and beneficial for the purposes of this study.

Once the samples had been selected and obtained in hard copy, the content analysis, or Toynbee's third 'coding' phase, was conducted by categorising the phrases and key terminology within each article within a bespoke template, as it was anticipated that this approach would provide a structured basis for comparative analysis by year, publication title and genre. The category headings within the template were derived from the outcomes of the journalist interviews and finalised after conducting some trial analyses with a small sample of articles. To reduce the effects of researcher subjectivity incurred during the categorisation process, and to help identify any typing errors which might have occurred in the transposition of text from original articles to each analysis table, a randomly selected twenty per cent of the articles (8) were checked by a knowledgeable third party (Dr Dai Griffiths) which resulted in a handful of typing corrections.

Once all articles had been dissected in this way, the final interpretation phase comprised of a series of comparative analyses, involving the observation of similarities and differences between articles according to genre, year and publication title, within each analysis category; the outcomes of which are presented in Chapter 4.

2.3. Music journalists

The second set of primary data was obtained from interviews with music journalists as follows.

2.3.1 Method for selecting and gathering data

In order to define the names of journalists, and quantity of participants, to be invited to participate in this research the database was sorted and filtered to identify those writers who had contributed to both the daily and Sunday publications included in this study, thus providing a full sample frame. In defining the size of the sample group it was acknowledged that the maximum number of subjects included would in part depend on the amount of time available, since it was anticipated that the process of transcribing the interviews would be particularly time consuming; indeed Bryman highlighted the requirement to "allow sufficient time for transcription and be realistic about how many interviews you are going to be able to transcribe in the time available".²⁵¹ In view of this, and in order to balance pragmatism with the need to minimise error, e.g. resulting from individual bias or misinformation from individual participants, it was decided that a quota sampling method would be adopted whereby, ideally, three journalists would be selected for interview from each daily broadsheet and two from each Sunday publication, with those appearing most frequently within the database comprising the primary selection. A balanced quota of journalists from each gender and

²⁵¹ Bryman, Alan: *Social Research Methods*, p. 331.

genre was attempted (excluding early and contemporary music since few articles from these genres existed and it was considered less important to speak to unknown journalists covering minority genres) in order to access a greater breadth of collective experience and to triangulate the data obtained from each wherever possible. Inevitably, the emerging nature of rock, pop, jazz and roots coverage meant that fewer journalists from these genres were available with broadsheet writing experience across the entire period examined, however any classical bias in the final selection of journalists was deemed acceptable since it would permit further exploration of the changing fortunes of classical music writing against the backdrop of increasing popular music coverage.

Contact details for the journalists within the initial sample group were then obtained, typically via their current publishers or the internet, however in the small number of cases where no contact information could be found substitute journalists were identified and contacted, again typically via the internet but also by following up leads provided by participating journalists. As such, some of the sample group were selected as convenience or opportunistic samples, the disadvantage of which being that friends and peers of other participants were more likely to share similar views and experiences. However, in order to overcome the inherent disadvantages of this sampling method, the substitutions were made in such a way as to maintain the publication, genre and gender specification of the original desired sample group wherever possible. Once an individual indicated agreement to participate, they were contacted again by email, telephone or letter in order to arrange mutually agreeable meeting dates and venues.

Only very few of the original selection of journalists did not participate; Edward Greenfield could not participate due to ill health,²⁵² John Fordham originally agreed to participate but then withdrew due to work commitments, Robert Maycock and Andy Gill were both invited although responses were never received. Later on in the research John Lucas and Roger Alton were also invited to participate in order to gain editorial perspectives, however the former declined as he considered his former role to be outside the scope of the project,²⁵³ and the latter declined due to current work commitments.

Invitations were prepared outlining the nature of the research and requesting an interview of up to two hours with each potential participant. In order to fulfil requirements stipulated by Oxford Brookes University's Research Ethics Committee, the selected individuals received an invitation letter (template provided in Appendix N, although this was modified slightly in some cases, typically when sent as a reminder letter), Participant Information Sheet (Appendix O) and Consent Form (Appendix P). Arksey and Knight suggest that the Information Sheet in particular acts as an important 'first

²⁵² However, some archived interview material with Mr Greenfield, held at *The Guardian* archives, was incorporated since the views which he expressed within this particular source related to several of the topics examined in this research.

²⁵³ John Lucas email response dated 6th September 2006 explained "I realise I am not the person you need, for I gave up editing *The Observer*'s arts pages in 1983 and left the paper (and journalism) two years later. Many of the real changes in musical journalism – e.g. wall-to-wall coverage of pop music – came after that date."

impression tool' and that it should demonstrate "a genuine and serious interest".²⁵⁴ As such the information sheet explained the purpose of the study, why the respondent had been selected, the consequences of participating, the benefits and risks of taking part, assurances concerning confidentiality and anonymity regarding employment details (namely within Section B of the interview questions) and details of who they could contact about the project. Its design also adopted Arksey and Knight's suggested 'question-and-answer' format and reflected their view that a "personal approach, using pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'you', is more inviting".²⁵⁵ Participants then responded to their invitation by email, telephone or letter.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed most suitable since they would generate qualitative data in a standardised format which would facilitate analysis later on and allow freedom, on the part of both researcher and interviewee, to spontaneously follow up unexpected or particularly useful lines of enquiry and maintain the flow of discussion. Indeed Arksey and Knight confirm that a semi-structured approach to interviewing is "commonest in qualitative work, where there is a desire to hear what informants have to say on the topics identified by the researcher",²⁵⁶ whilst Bernard's recommendations also deemed this method most suitable for this particular project:

"In situations where you won't get more than one chance to interview someone, semistructured interviewing is best. It has much of the freewheeling quality of unstructured interviewing, and requires all the same skills, but semistructured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order...The interviewer maintains discretion to follow leads, but the interview guide is a set of clear instructions...you should build a guide and follow it if you want reliable, comparable qualitative data. Semistructured interviewing works very well in projects where you are dealing with managers, bureaucrats, and elite members of a community – people who are used to efficient use of their time. It demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent to follow new leads. It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control over the respondent".²⁵⁷

It was, however, recognised that interviewing carries several drawbacks and as such a number of steps were identified which would help to counteract the inherent difficulties of the method (Appendix Q); in particular, it was acknowledged that a drawback of the chosen interview method was that participants were "only in a position of explaining their perspective on the items chosen by the researcher",²⁵⁸ however to counterbalance this, the interview structure was designed to enable

²⁵⁴ Arksey, Hilary and Peter Knight: *Interviewing for Social Scientists*, p. 70.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵⁷ Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

²⁵⁸ Arksey and Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

interviewees to add further comments, as they saw fit, both at the midway and end point of the discussion.

In preparation for the interviews proper, a trial was conducted²⁵⁹ with a volunteer freelance music journalist who contributed to *The Times* newspaper, in order to a) seek feedback on the proposed area of research itself b) seek feedback on the draft interview questions and c) test the interview style and data recording methods. As a result of this trial, it became clear that it was necessary to replace the distracting practice of taking hand-written notes, as a back-up to a single audio recorder, with a second audio recorder since this would increase both parties' ability to concentrate more fully on the discussion. The trial interview also highlighted that many journalists were freelance and therefore more suitable terminology was necessary when discussing the professional relationship between journalists and their publishers.

The final sample group comprised ten males and three females; no personal data was captured relating to participants' age or ethnic origin as this was not deemed necessary.

The interview questions were then finalised, comprising a series of open-ended questions intending to reveal a) participants' experiences of working as music journalists during the period 1981 - 1991 (including their content and style of writing, the advent of rock and pop criticism in the broadsheets, the Wapping Dispute and political climate, traditions and quality of music criticism) and b) those factors which influenced their employment during the same period (including recruitment, reward, training and development, relations with employers).

It was recognised that the quality of the data collected would to some extent be dependent upon the quality of the relationship established between the interviewer and interviewee. For this reason a face-to-face approach was deemed most likely to present opportunities to influence a positive rapport with participants and several steps were taken to enhance the quality of the relationship between interviewee and interviewer (Appendix R). Many other advantages of this method were also recognised, including those which Bernard summarises as follows:

“If a respondent doesn't understand a question in a personal interview, you can fill in, and, if you sense that a respondent is not answering fully, you can probe for more complete data...Personal interviews at home can be much longer than telephone or self-administered questionnaires...Face-to-face respondents get one question at a time and can't flip through the questionnaire to see what's coming...With face-to-face interviews you know who answers the questions”,²⁶⁰ seemed to outweigh the disadvantages, namely that “They are intrusive and reactive...Personal interviews are costly in both time and money...Personal

²⁵⁹ At his home on 14th January 2005.

²⁶⁰ Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

interview surveys conducted by lone researchers over a long period of time run the risk of being overtaken by events”.²⁶¹

As no funding existed to compensate for time and income lost by those freelance journalists who agreed to participate, interviews were held at locations, dates and times that were convenient for participants. Whilst this meant that the interview conditions were not standard, which therefore may have affected the quality and comparability of the results, the primary consideration was to secure sufficient participation even if at the cost of ideal interview conditions. The interviews took place in a variety of locations, including public houses, workplaces, education premises and interviewees’ homes either at the interviewees’ request or through mutual agreement to ensure ease of access for both parties. One telephone interview was conducted (Paul Griffiths) due to the distant location of the interviewee’s home and the researchers’ advanced stages of pregnancy at that time. In this instance the same interview questions and format were applied although only a single recording device was used due to technical limitations. Unfortunately in this instance, due to the technology used, the recording of the interview was of reduced quality, however the transcription was forwarded to the interviewee for corrections and comments to minimise the extent of any error or misunderstanding. It is recognised that the range of venues adopted may have affected interviewee responses, given the associated variances in background noise (perhaps affecting the ability to concentrate) or sense of formality (i.e. associated with public or private spaces), however in all cases the approach to questioning was replicated as far as possible and it was considered more important to accommodate journalists venue suggestions in order to ensure their participation. All interviews were conducted between 27th March 2006 and 25th October 2006, with each one usually taking between one and three hours to complete.

It is acknowledged that bias would inevitably have existed not only in the questions that were asked but also in the way that they were presented and responded to. Arksey and Knight agree that “negative reactions may have implications for the reliability of the study. This is because the way we react to people influences the questions we ask, what we hear and how we interpret what is said. In other words, the researcher’s own responses can distort or bias the analysis”.²⁶² To overcome these risks, the phrasing of the interview questions and the interviewer’s reactions to participants’ responses were taken into consideration during the analysis of the results.

A reflective approach was adopted, particularly after the first few interviews, which resulted in a number of improvements being made to the phrasing of questions. Furthermore, the process of transcribing the interviews provided opportunities to reflect upon and subsequently improve the phrasing of questions and interviewer responses, and where an individual interview brought to light a particularly fruitful piece of new information this was mentioned in subsequent interviews where appropriate. Inevitably, the dynamic between researcher and participant differed during each

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

²⁶² Arksey and Knight, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

interview as a result the interviewer and interviewee's responses to the personal characteristics of the other, such as personality, gender, age, appearance, occupation and accent. Beyond introducing standardisation to the introduction and conclusion of the interviews, and maintaining a degree of consistency in the researcher's temperament and appearance, this was deemed unavoidable but taken into consideration when considering the results.

2.3.2 Method for recording data

In order to reduce the risk of participants being misquoted or misunderstood, interviews were recorded using two small un-intrusive digital recording devices; the use of two devices representing an attempt to minimise the risk of data loss through the technical failure of a single device. In addition, some key words, names and summary notes were taken during the interviews as it was felt useful to write down unfamiliar names, facts and check spelling in the participant's presence. There were two key disadvantages to the chosen recording method; firstly the verbatim transcription process was extremely lengthy, with each interview taking up to five times its original duration time to complete, and secondly it was recognised that recording the interview "might increase nervousness or dissuade frankness".²⁶³ To overcome the latter of these, reassurances of confidentiality and the option of anonymity were reiterated at the beginning of each interview.

On balance however, the method delivered several key advantages; firstly, as summarised by Arksey and Knight, "the interviewer can concentrate on what is said. There is a permanent record that captures the whole of the conversation verbatim, as well as tone of voice, emphases, pauses and the like...(and it) demonstrates to informants that their responses are being treated seriously".²⁶⁴ Secondly, the digital recording equipment enabled the speed of the original dialogue to be reduced, stopped or paused and background noise to be reduced, all of which enhanced the quality of the transcriptions. Thirdly, the use of two recorders, and the resulting two different versions, proved particularly valuable when a word or portion of speech was inaudible on a single version.

The interview transcriptions were initially transcribed verbatim however it was discovered that, as Atkins points out, this sometimes causes a problem in terms of 'readability', i.e. that "the more *comprehensible* and readable the reported speech, the less 'authentic' it must be. The less the ethnographer intervenes, the more delicately he or she transcribes, the *less* readable becomes the reported speech".²⁶⁵ It was decided that as the product of the research would be a written thesis, it would be appropriate to take some limited measures to maximise the readability of the transcriptions. Furthermore, due to the significant size of each transcription, often totalling in excess of ten thousand words, it was considered appropriate for some minor editing to occur, typically to remove dialectical nuances (repeated phrases such as 'you know', 'um'), incomplete sentences, duplicate words (except where used as emphasis) and material which would definitely not be used. Similarly, the phrasing of some of the questions differed slightly from interview to interview in order to fit the flow of the

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Seale, Clive: *Social Research Methods*, p. 389.

conversation, however the transcription reflects only the main thrust of the question in order to save space. It was recognised that this meant damaging the purity of the data to some extent and that the amount of editing undertaken varied according to the manner in which the participant expressed themselves. Therefore, to guard against participants being mis-understood or mis-quoted, and to therefore reinforce the reliability of the data, participants were each sent a transcription of their interview, within 28 days of its occurrence, (unless agreed otherwise) and asked to 'approve' its contents. This usually resulted in a handful of corrections to each transcription, typically misspelled names of people and places.

2.3.3 Method for analysing data

Seale points out that when conducting social and cultural research there are two possible modes for considering interview results:

Firstly, "The social world is assumed to have an existence that is independent of the language used to describe it. The accounts given by interviewees are assessed according to how accurately they reflect this real social world. Therefore, in the classical tradition, interview data are assessed for *bias* in the extent to which they represent a distortion of the truth. At the opposite end of the spectrum from this *realist* approach is an *idealist* one..., in which interview data – or indeed any account of the social world – are seen as presenting but one of many possible worlds".²⁶⁶

This research adopted an idealist stance whereby each interview was treated as an equally valid oral history and respected as such in its own right. Interview results were compared to each other and data from other sources in order to understand different perspectives, but not to assess the extent to which they distorted any given truth.

As mentioned above, the analysis of the results occurred both as an ongoing activity during the schedule of interviews and as a separate comparative exercise upon their completion. The themed approach to the interview questions in turn provided a framework for the final analysis exercise whereby comparisons were drawn from the results within each topic area. It is acknowledged that this approach to interpretation was inherently subjective, however it ensured that the results presented were focussed and relevant to the aims of this study. Key extracts from the interviews are presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

²⁶⁶ Seale, Clive: *Researching Society and Culture*, pp. 202-203.

2.4. Other relevant primary and secondary sources

In order to triangulate the analysis of historical newspapers and interviews with journalists, a third set of data was drawn from other relevant sources.

2.4.1 Method for selecting and gathering data

Materials were sourced both proactively, by searching library databases and catalogues using relevant search criteria and identifying suitable sources from bibliographic references within associated texts, and reactively, by reading texts recommended by interviewees and other knowledgeable parties.

2.4.2 Method for recording data

Information obtained from other relevant sources has been included within the appropriate chapters of this thesis where relevant, including in particular the literature review presented in Chapter 1.

2.4.3 Method for analysing data

Information gleaned from other relevant sources was critically assessed against the results obtained from the primary research methods described earlier in this chapter, and the results are explored within the relevant chapters of this thesis.

2.5 Summary

In summary, this study adopts an exploratory approach, and triangulates data obtained from historical broadsheet newspapers, interviews with broadsheet music journalists and a range of other relevant sources. A wide variety of methods have been employed in selecting, gathering, recording and analysing the data obtained from each source and the benefits and drawbacks of each have been acknowledged. It has also been acknowledged that the data collected for this study, along with its interpretation, was exposed to both a small element of potential bias towards classical music, by virtue of its presence within the broadsheet press across the entire period examined and in line with the wish to explore the displacement of classical music, and to potential personal bias, exaggeration and misrepresentation on the part of both the author and the research participants; however various measures, as detailed above, have been taken to maximise the validity and reliability of the research results.

Chapter 3 – Quantitative Analysis of Newspaper Articles

3.1 Introduction

As described in the previous chapter, a large database was constructed for the purpose of this study into which the music-related content of 744 sample newspaper editions was recorded to enable a series of quantitative analyses to be undertaken which would identify developments in broadsheet music coverage between 1981 and 1991. The analysis was designed to answer a series of research questions which had been formulated as a result of both the earlier Masters degree research, the findings of the literature review and, in the case of research question J, the journalist interviews. The research questions are listed in Table 2 below, and the locations of the related analysis results within the remainder of this chapter, which are mostly presented in graphical format, are indicated in the adjacent column²⁶⁷.

Table 2. Overview of research questions for quantitative analysis

Ref.	Research Questions	Location of Results
A	Were there any significant shifts in the number of words devoted to the coverage of each genre (excluding adverts, event guides, competitions and charts and articles recorded as 'other') by publication (both individually and collectively) and across the period 1981 – 1991?	3.2.1
B	Were there any shifts in the types of articles which appeared during the period 1981 – 1991 according to genre or publication title, e.g. reduction in reviews and increase in previews, features/profiles mostly relating to rock/pop articles?	3.2.2
C	Who were the most prolific music writers across the publications included in this study during the period 1981 – 1991, and which genres did they cover?	3.2.3
D	How did the quantity of music advertising change between 1981 – 1991 in terms of the number of adverts which appeared and the page space (cm ²) they occupied, by publication, year and genre, and when and where did colour advertisements start to appear?	3.2.4
E	Was there any correlation between genre and the number and size of pictures (including photos) across all publications and years?	3.2.5
F	Was there any correlation between an articles 'position on the page' and genre?	3.2.6
G	How did the appearance and nature of music-related obituaries change over the period under review? With which genre were obituaries most often associated?	3.2.7

²⁶⁷ The process of assimilating data to investigate the research questions resulted in the creation of numerous graphs, although many of which, due to word count restrictions and the need to present a succinct argument, have not been presented in this thesis (although their titles are listed within Appendix S). Only those graphs which indicated shifting trends were incorporated and discussed within this Chapter.

H	When did the music 'Chart' and 'Competition' appear in the broadsheet press and where, and to which genres were they associated	3.2.8
I	How did the size (total pages) of each newspaper change and how many dedicated 'Arts' pages existed within each newspaper across the period 1981 - 1991?	3.2.9
J	Did the number of words devoted to music reviews decrease during the period 1981 - 1991?	3.2.10

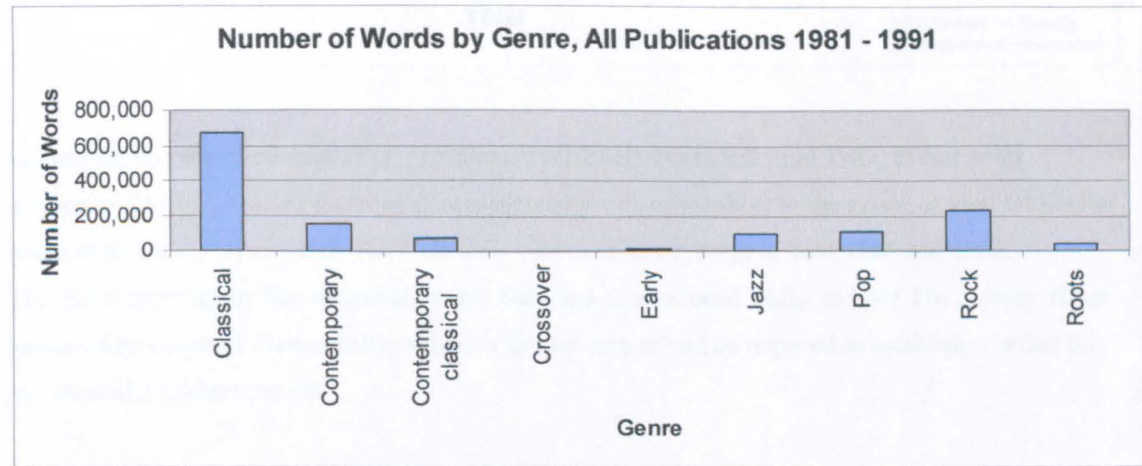
The results of the analysis are provided below and a summary of the key findings presented in section 3.3.

3.2 Results

3.2.1. Research question A: Were there any significant shifts in the number of words devoted to the coverage of each genre (excluding adverts, event guides, competitions and charts and articles recorded as 'other') by publication (both individually and collectively) and across the period 1981 – 1991?

A total of 1,408,752 words²⁶⁸ were devoted to music criticism within the sample group (excluding all adverts, event guides, charts, competitions, obituaries, articles recorded with type 'other', articles with my genre recorded as 'n/a' and publications recorded as containing 'no music coverage', and including all reviews, previews, features/profiles and combinations of these three article types). Of these, it emerged that nearly half (47.9%) were devoted to classical music alone (Fig. 1), whilst the genre with the second highest percentage of coverage, rock, amounted to only 16.7% of the total, with the combined total of wordage devoted to both rock and pop accounting for 24.8% of the total words.

Fig. 1

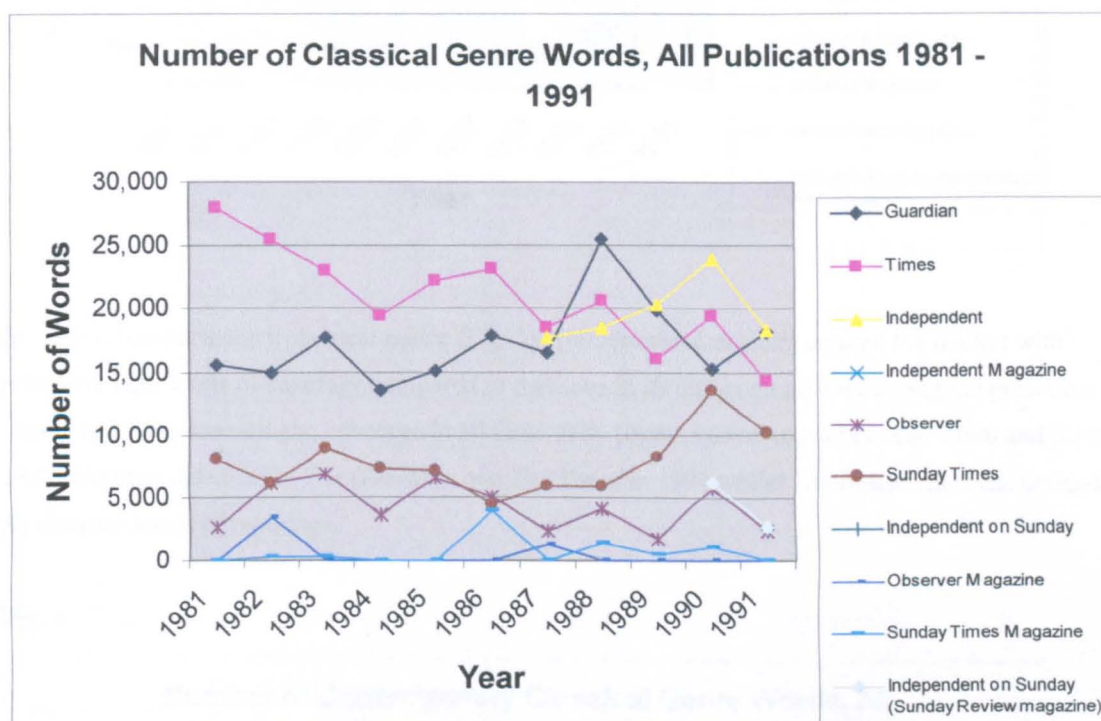


The word distributions within each genre category were then scrutinised according to publication title. Beginning with classical music coverage (Fig. 2), a distinctive year on year decrease in the number of

²⁶⁸ Figure derived from totalling the estimated word counts, or manual word counts where available, of the articles in the database.

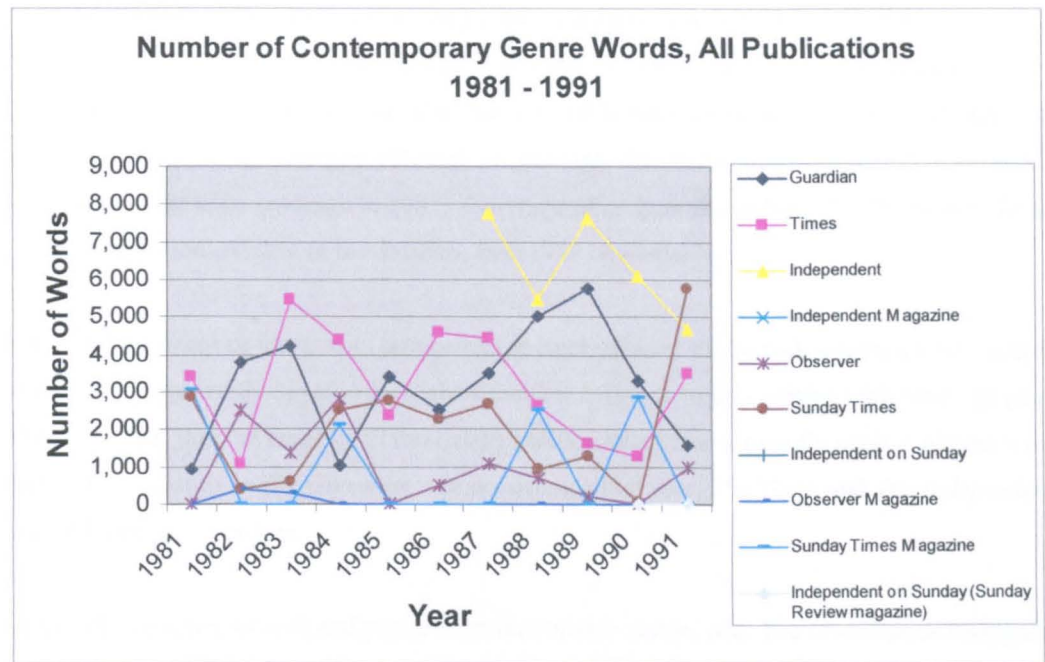
words devoted to the genre was observed in *The Times* newspaper between 1981 and 1991, with coverage of classical music over this period almost halving. It was also possible to discern that, upon entering the market, the number of words which *The Independent* devoted to classical coverage was closely in line with the number of words which appeared in *The Guardian* and *The Times* newspapers at that time. *The Guardian's* coverage of classical music coverage peaked in 1988 but was otherwise relatively consistent across the eleven year period. Of the Sunday newspapers included in this study, *The Sunday Times* almost consistently devoted the highest number of words to classical music, with a notable increase occurring after 1989.

Fig. 2



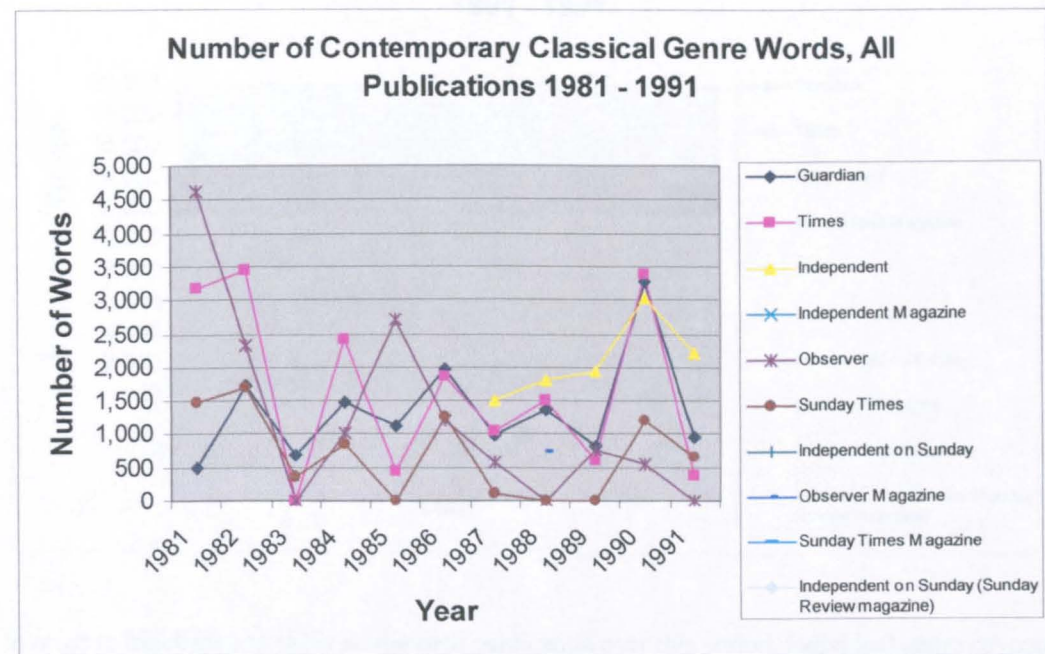
Contemporary music coverage (Fig. 3) remained relatively consistent until 1987; at that point newcomer *The Independent* awarded unprecedented levels of wordage to the genre, at least within the scope of this study, after which *The Guardian* increased its coverage in both 1988 and 1989. Thereafter coverage in *The Independent* and *The Guardian* reduced whilst in 1991 *The Sunday Times* increased its coverage dramatically, although further data would be required to establish whether this represented a longer term shift.

Fig. 3



In terms of contemporary classical music (Fig. 4), *The Independent* again entered the market with relatively high levels of coverage compared to that seen in its daily competitors during the preceding years. In 1990, interestingly, coverage in all three daily papers converged at between 3,000 and 3,500 words but then tailed off in *The Guardian* and *The Times* in 1991 whilst *The Independent* maintained its elevated levels of reportage.

Fig. 4

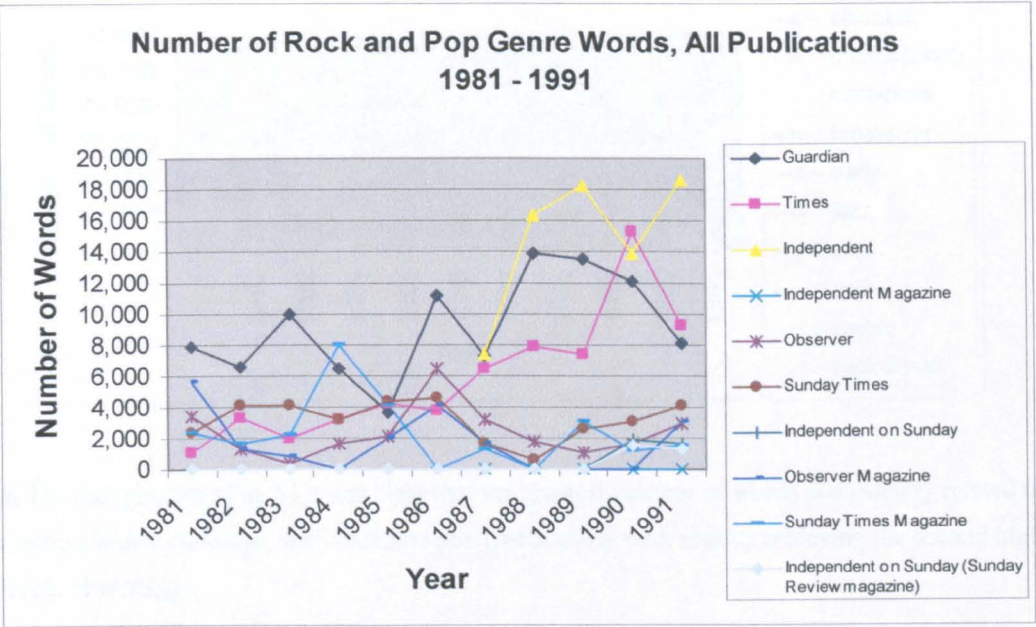


The extent of music classed as ‘crossover’ within the database was relatively small and no trends emerged in terms of its coverage over the period examined. The highest levels of wordage devoted to ‘crossover’ music appeared in *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian*, with no coverage in *The Independent*. Similarly, the volume of words devoted to early music was also relatively small and again no obvious trends emerged, although interestingly *The Independent* dedicated an unprecedented level of wordage to its coverage in 1987. Coverage of early music in both *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* became non-existent in the database from 1989 onwards.

No overall decrease or increase in jazz coverage emerged over the period, although it was noted that *The Guardian* generally devoted the highest number of words to jazz writing with coverage peaking in 1989. In 1988, jazz coverage in all three daily publications became broadly similar, although in 1989, and in stark contrast to *The Guardian*’s peak coverage that year, *The Times* and *The Independent* reduced their jazz wordage.

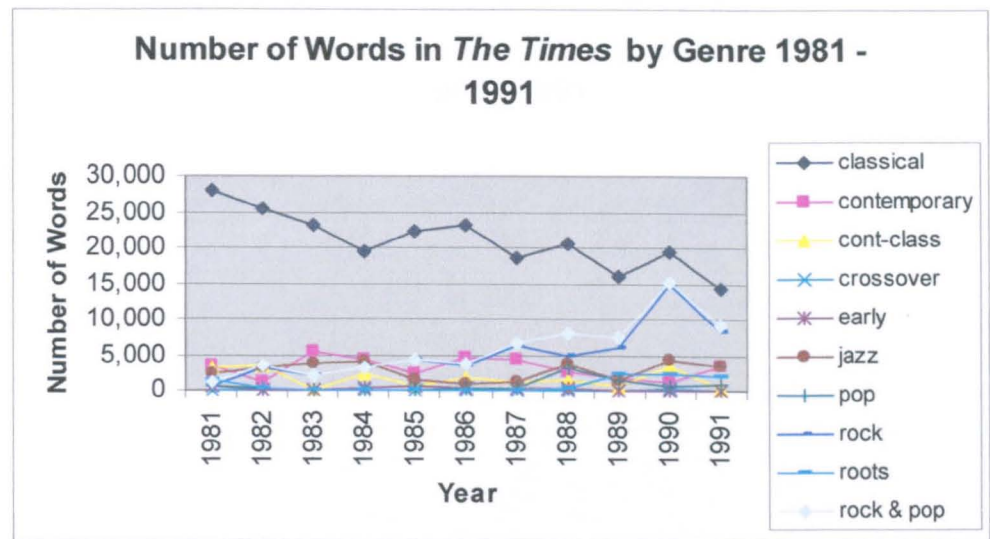
Until 1987 coverage of rock and pop remained relatively stable, with *The Guardian* devoting the highest wordage to the genres (Fig. 5). However, once *The Independent* appeared the extent of rock and pop coverage appearing in the other two daily newspapers generally increased above levels seen in the preceding years. *The Independent* entered the market with very similar levels of coverage to its two daily counterparts but then proceeded to generally exceed all other publications in its attention to these genres.

Fig. 5



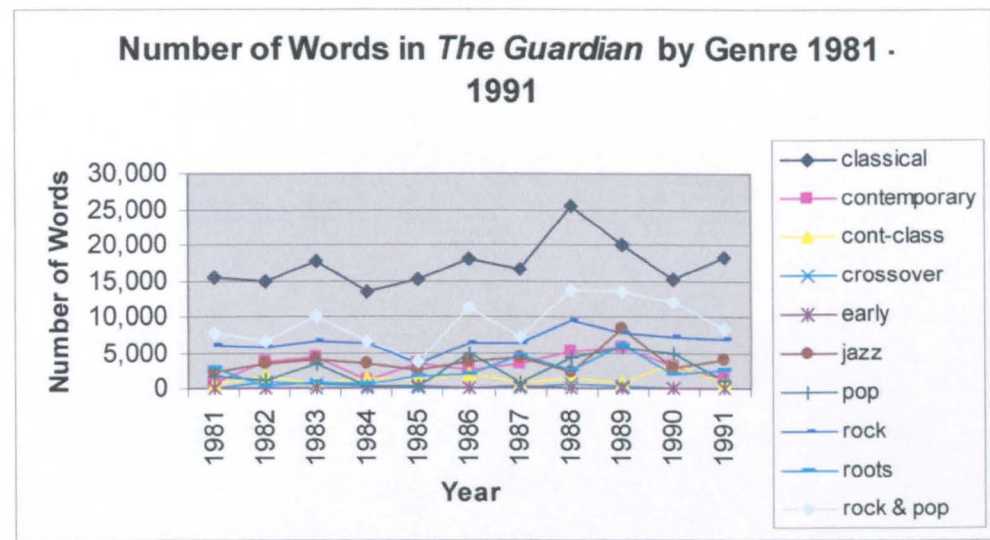
In order to highlight any shifts *within* each publication over this period, individual genre coverage summaries were created for each publication. Beginning with *The Times* (Fig. 6), a distinct decline in classical coverage, offset against a parallel rise in rock and pop coverage, was highlighted.

Fig. 6



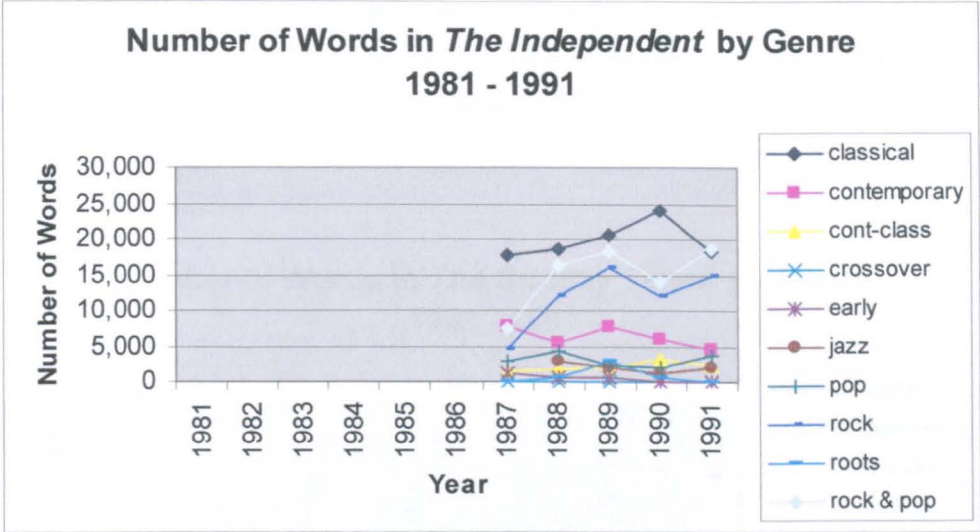
Whilst this extent of change was not reflected in *The Guardian* (Fig. 7), a slight increase in rock and pop coverage, compared to previous years, was observed between 1988 and 1990 and classical coverage peaked in 1988.

Fig. 7



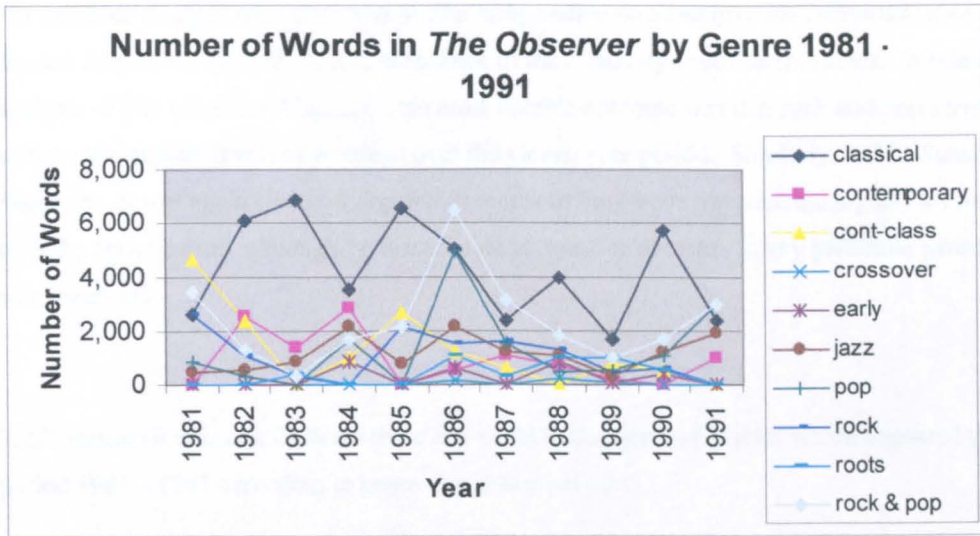
In *The Independent* (Fig. 8) it was clear that the greatest number of words consistently related to classical music coverage, with rock and pop (particularly rock music) achieving the second highest levels of wordage.

Fig. 8



Analysis of the sample articles from *The Observer* (Fig. 9) showed broadly declining coverage of both classical music and contemporary classical music over the period, and a roughly consistent levels of rock and pop coverage, although with a peak in 1986.

Fig. 9



Analysis of *The Sunday Times* (Fig. 10) highlighted relatively consistent levels of classical music coverage for most of the period, until an increase was observed from 1990. Collectively, rock and pop coverage was actually higher for the first half of the period than it was in the latter half, and contemporary music coverage increased sharply in 1991.

Fig. 10

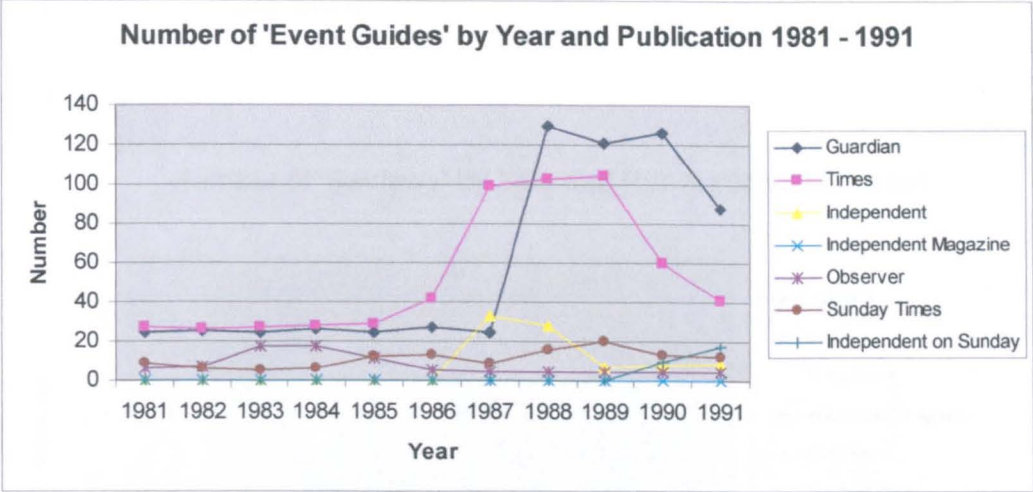


No trends or changes were observed in *The Independent on Sunday* or the *Independent on Sunday Review Magazine*; most likely a consequence of the relatively small sample sizes. In relation to the analysis of *The Observer Magazine*, the most notable outcome was that rock and pop seemed to achieve the highest levels of wordage over the eleven year period. Similarly, in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, it was again rock and pop which seems to have been awarded the highest levels of wordage over the entire period, although no discernable increase or decrease in any particular genre coverage was observed.

3.2.2. Research question B: Were there any shifts in the types of articles which appeared during the period 1981 – 1991 according to genre or publication title?

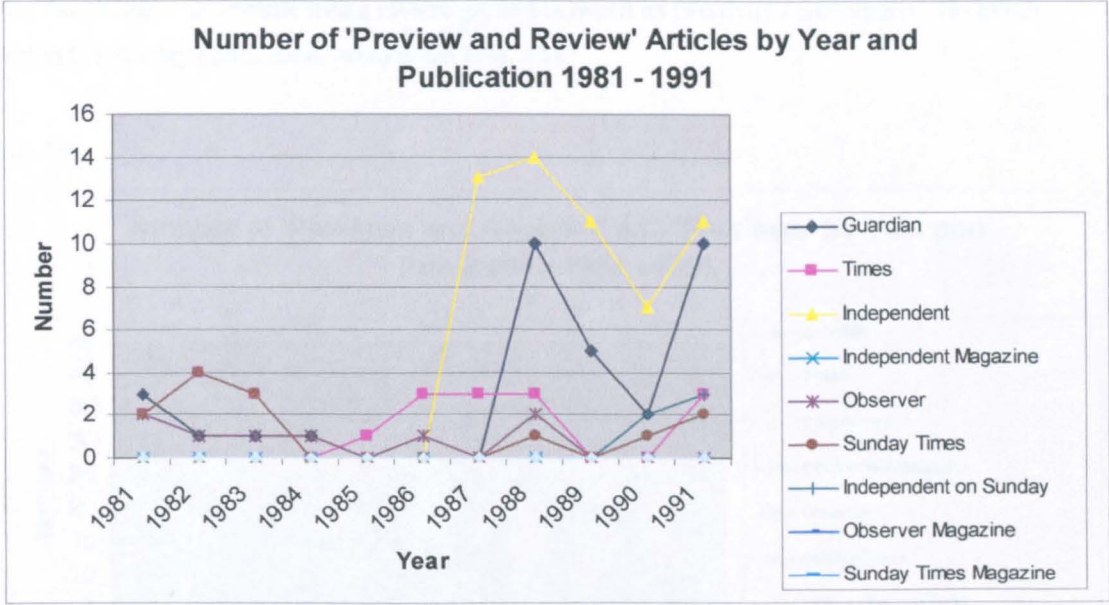
The first significant result of the analysis by article type and publication was a notable increase in the number of articles classed as music-related event guides in both *The Guardian* and *The Times* from 1987 and 1988 respectively (Fig. 11), although the number of such articles in these two publications began to reduce by the end of the period under review.

Fig. 11



In terms of articles recorded as either 'feature/ profile & review' or 'feature/ profile', no significant chronological trend was identified according to publication title, although *The Independent* generally seemed to include a higher number of feature articles than any other publication from 1987 onwards. Similarly, *The Independent* appeared to publish the greatest number of articles which combined a review with some preview content (Fig. 12), although *The Guardian* also increased its inclusion of such material in the years following *The Independent*'s arrival.

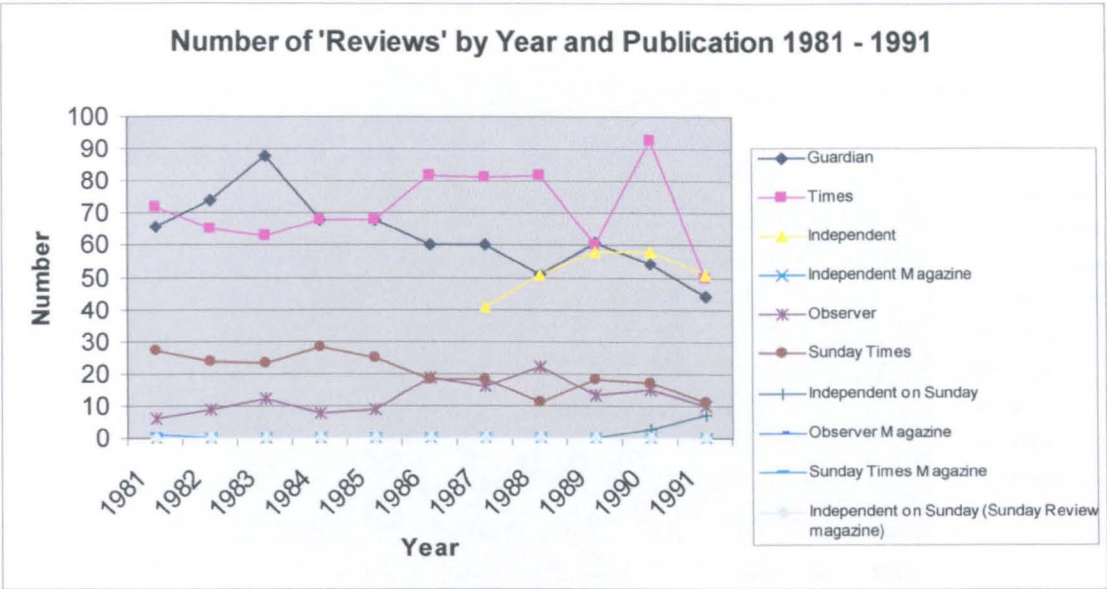
Fig. 12



Only in *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times* was any chronological reduction in the number of reviews apparent (Fig. 13). *The Independent*, from its launch year onwards, seemed not to attempt to exceed the number of reviews printed in either of its daily counterparts included in this study, and

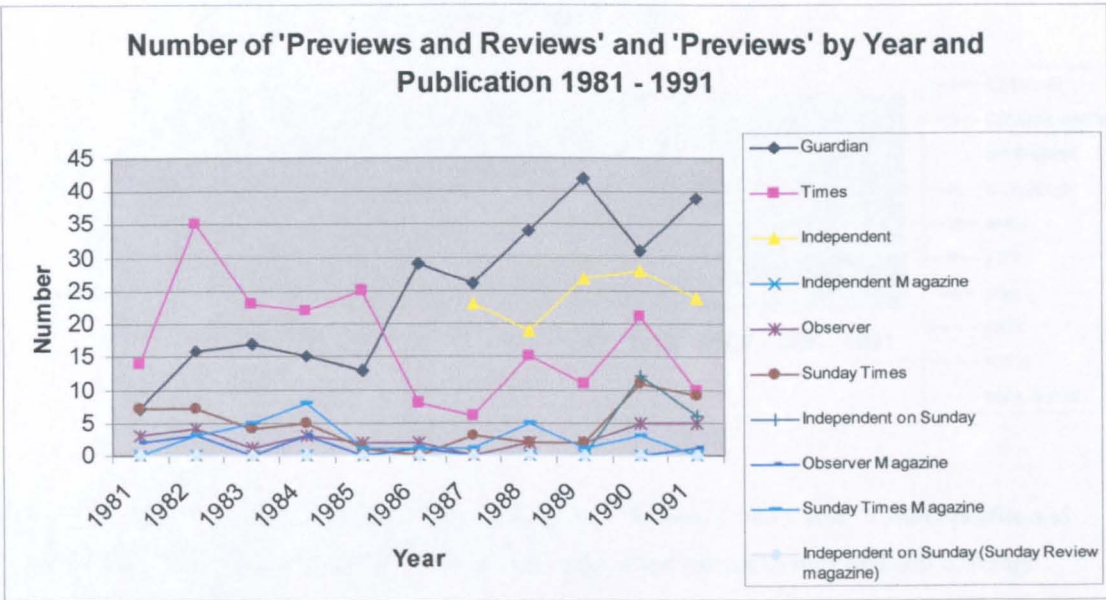
instead only slowly increased its inclusion of such articles to broadly match their frequency towards the end of the period under review.

Fig. 13



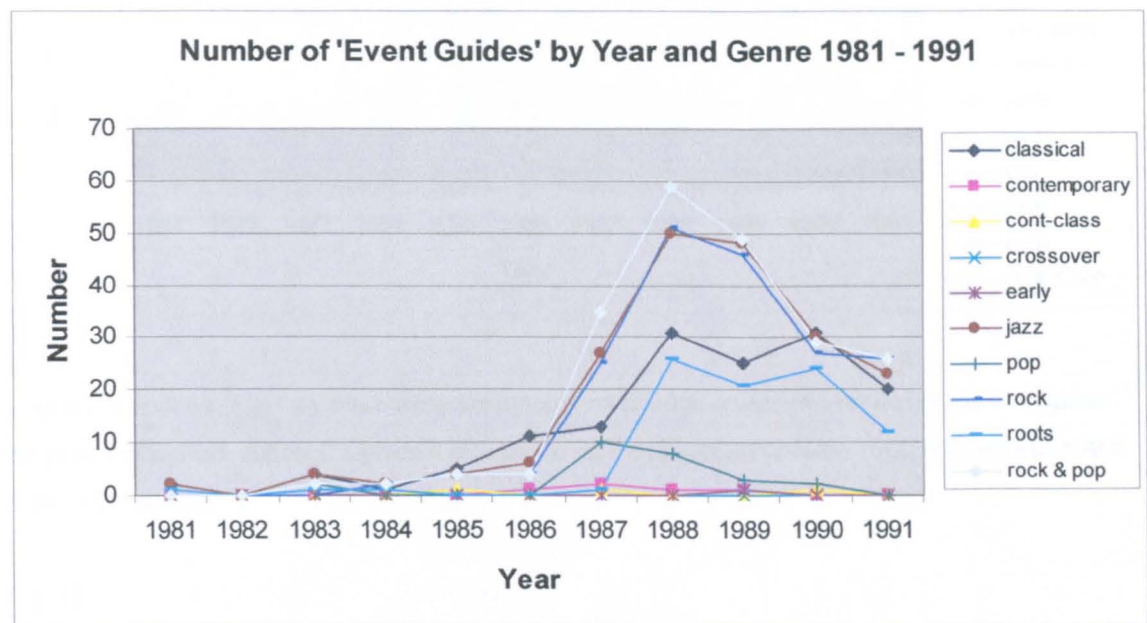
In charting all articles with some 'preview' content, whether as a pure preview article or as an element of a review article, it was apparent that *The Times* reduced its provision of such content whilst *The Guardian's* focus on previewing increased dramatically and steadily over the period under review. *The Independent* meanwhile trod a middle ground between its two daily counterparts. No trends within the Sunday publications were noted (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14



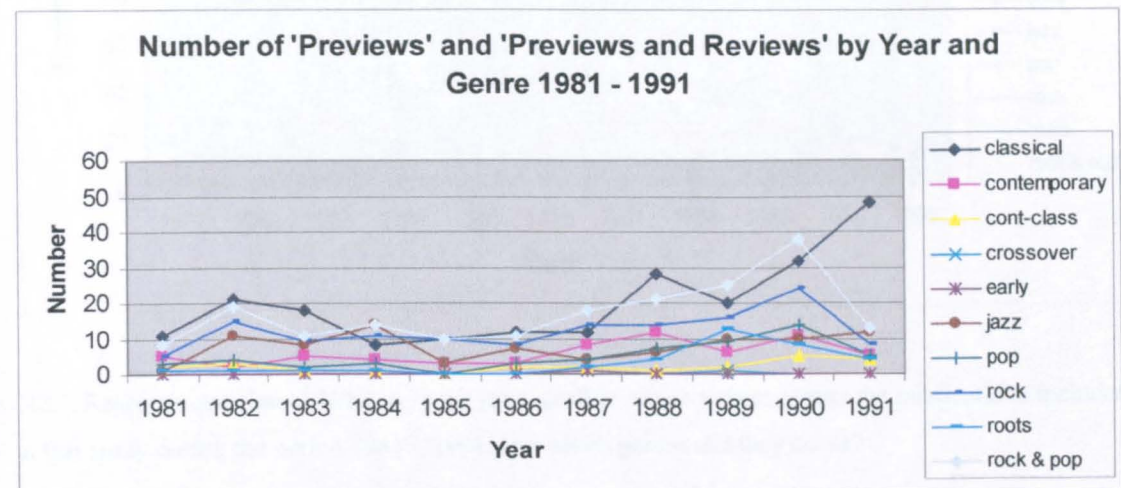
The analysis then sought to identify any changes in article types according to genre. This revealed a clear increase in the number of event guides (Fig. 15) relating to rock, pop, jazz and classical music from 1986 onwards, and also roots music from 1987 onwards.

Fig. 15



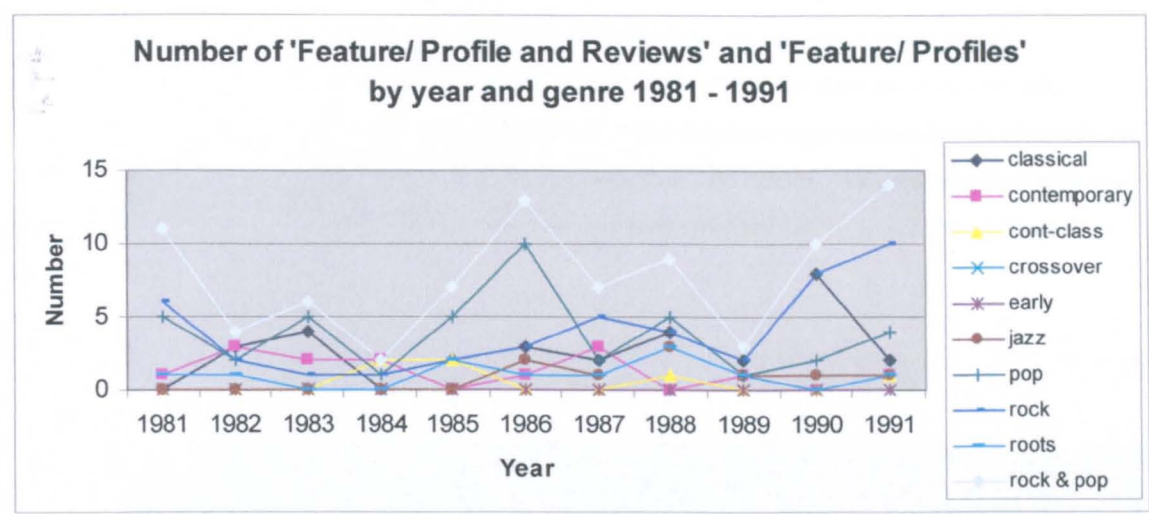
In terms of articles containing some preview content (Fig. 16), the most notable genre increases were seen in the rock, pop and classical music articles from around 1988 onwards.

Fig. 16



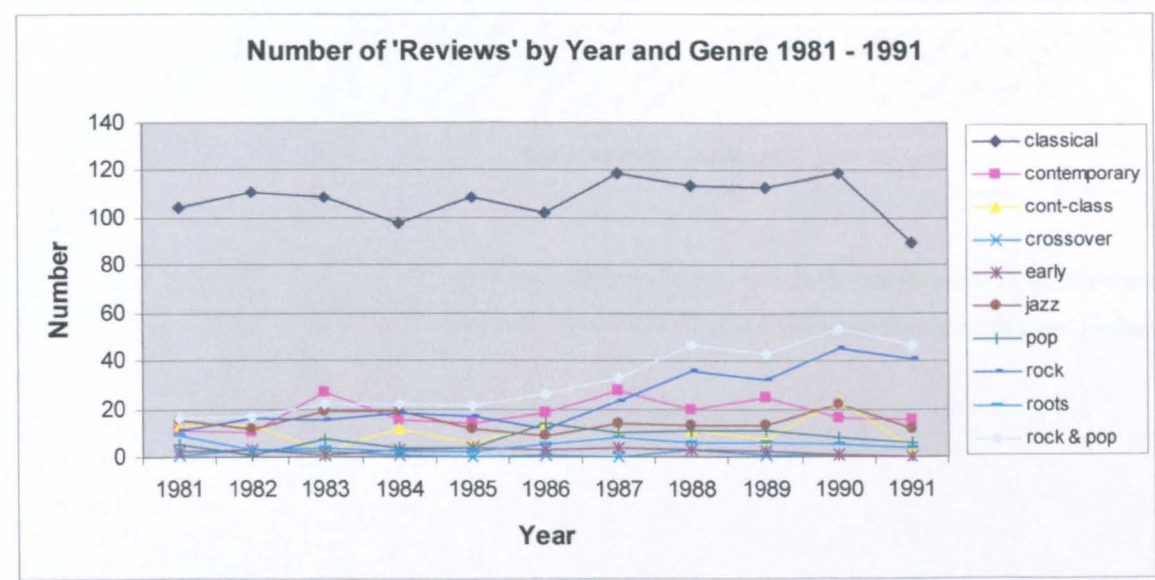
In combining the data relating to article types logged as 'feature/ profile' and 'feature/ profile and review' (Fig. 17) it was apparent that such articles most often related to rock and pop coverage throughout the period.

Fig. 17



In terms of reviews (Fig. 18), these were consistently most often related to classical music throughout the period examined, although a gradual increase in rock and pop, particularly rock, reviews was noted from 1986 onwards.

Fig. 18

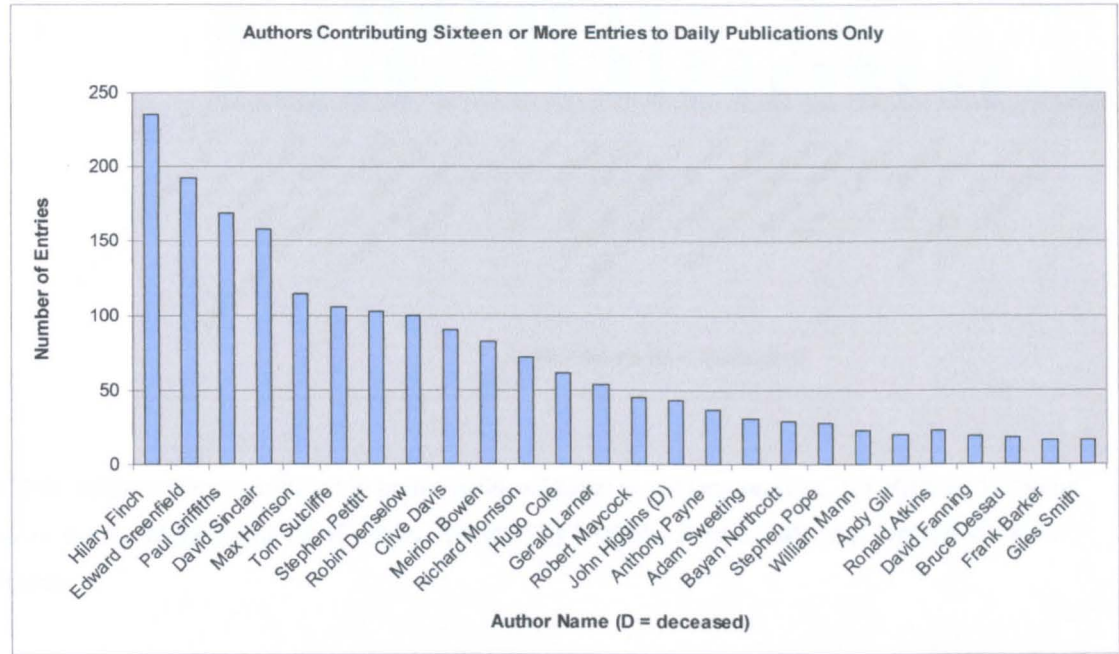


3.2.3. Research question C: Who were the most prolific music writers across the publications included in this study during the period 1981 – 1991, and which genres did they cover?

The database contained a total of 3,577 entries which were attributed to named authors. After duplicating four of these entries, to ensure that articles by multiple authors could be counted once for each individual author, a total of 3,581 entries were used as the basis for the following analyses. In order to focus attention on the key authors during the period, a number of database entries were discounted, namely those whose authors had contributed less than sixteen or four entries to daily or

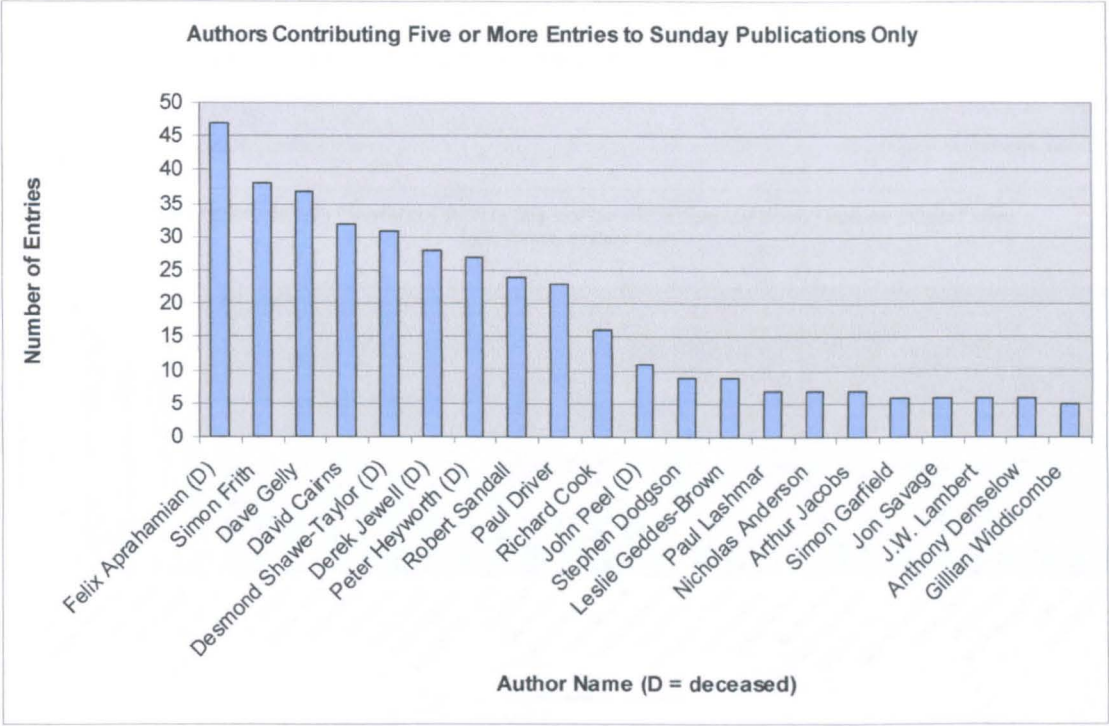
Sunday newspapers respectively, across the period examined. Entries by authors who had contributed to both daily and Sunday publications were also deleted where four or less were recorded. Subsequently a total of 2,886 entries remained. Of the authors who contributed solely to daily publications (Fig. 19), the highest number of entries in the database were attributable to Hilary Finch, who was also the only author to have contributed more than 200 entries. Authors contributing more than 150 entries to daily publications were Edward Greenfield, Paul Griffiths and David Sinclair.

Fig. 19



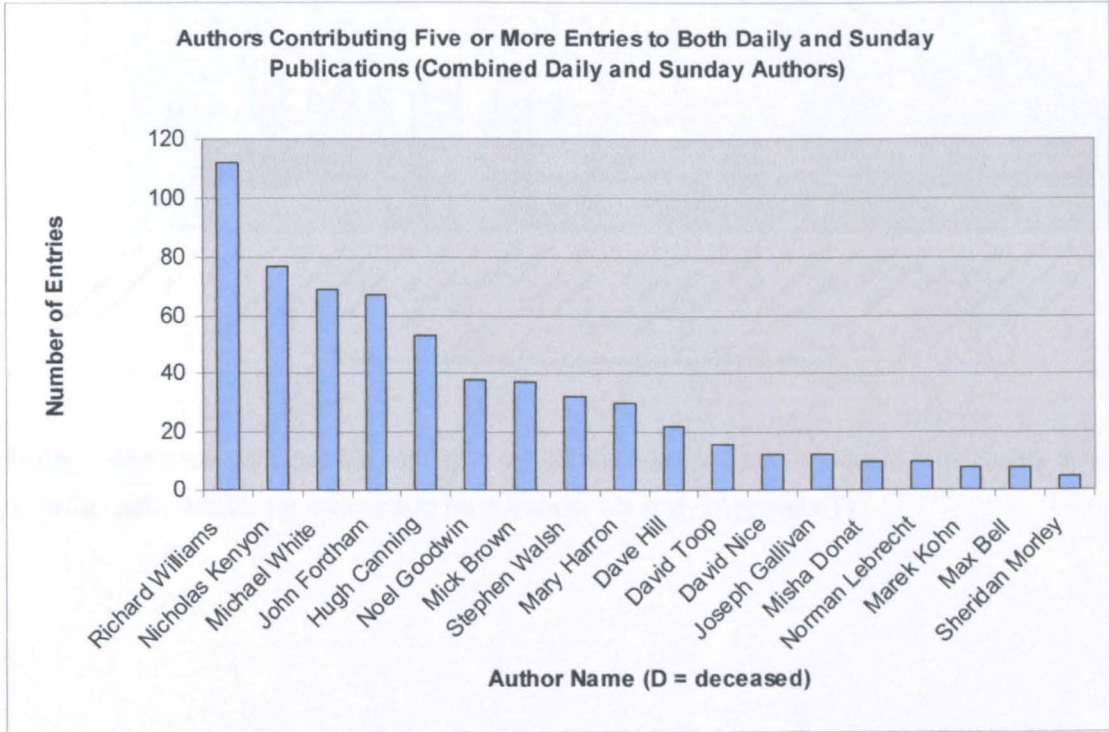
The highest number of entries by authors who contributed solely to Sunday publications (Fig. 20) were attributable to Felix Aprahamian, Simon Frith, Dave Gelly, David Cairns and Desmond Shawe-Taylor.

Fig. 20



Of the authors who contributed to both a daily and Sunday publication (Fig. 21), Richard Williams achieved the highest number of entries, followed by Nicholas Kenyon, Michael White and John Fordham.

Fig. 21



The database entries for authors who had contributed to both daily and Sunday publications were then merged with the data attributable to the ‘daily only’ and ‘Sunday only’ authors to identify the most prolific writers in daily and Sunday publications overall (Figs. 22 and 23).

Fig. 22

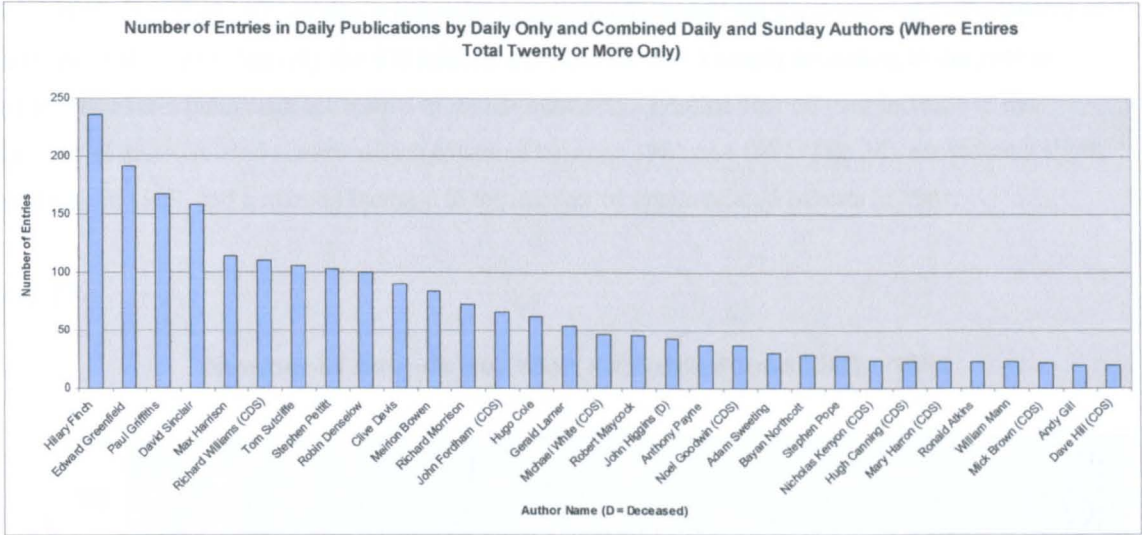
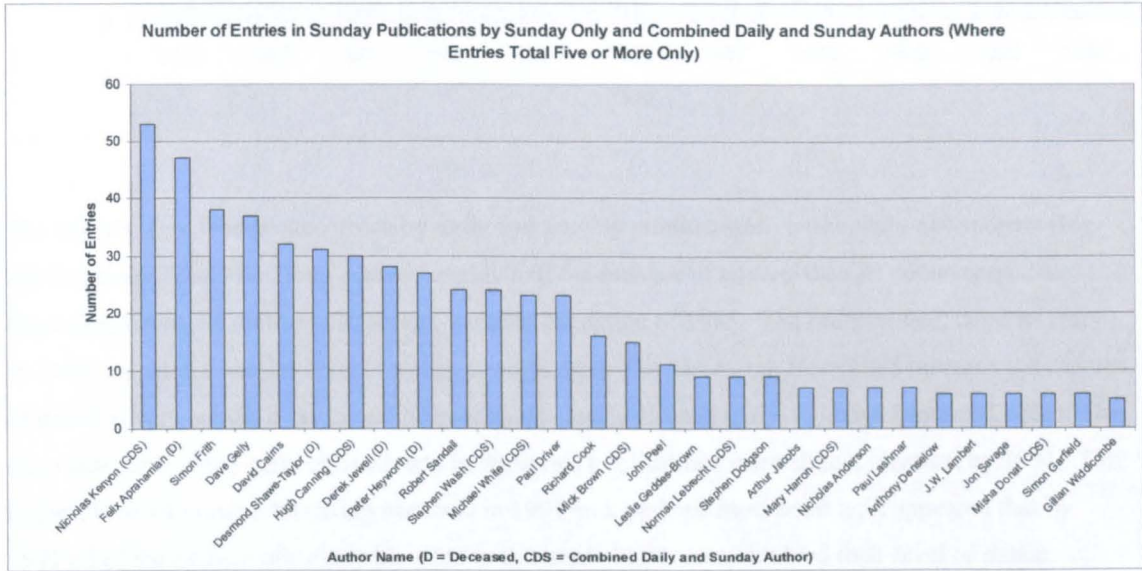


Fig. 23

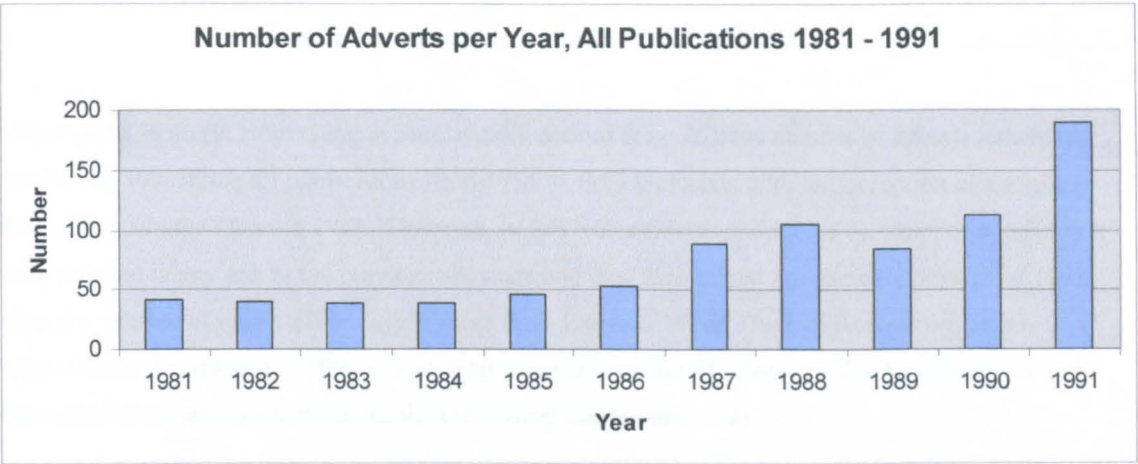


Finally, analysis was undertaken according to publication title and genre in order to help identify those journalists most suitable for invitation to participate in this study (Appendix T).

3.2.4. Research question D: How did the quantity of music advertising change between 1981 and 1991 in terms of the number of adverts which appeared and the page space (cm2) they occupied, by publication, year and genre, and when and where did colour advertisements start to appear?

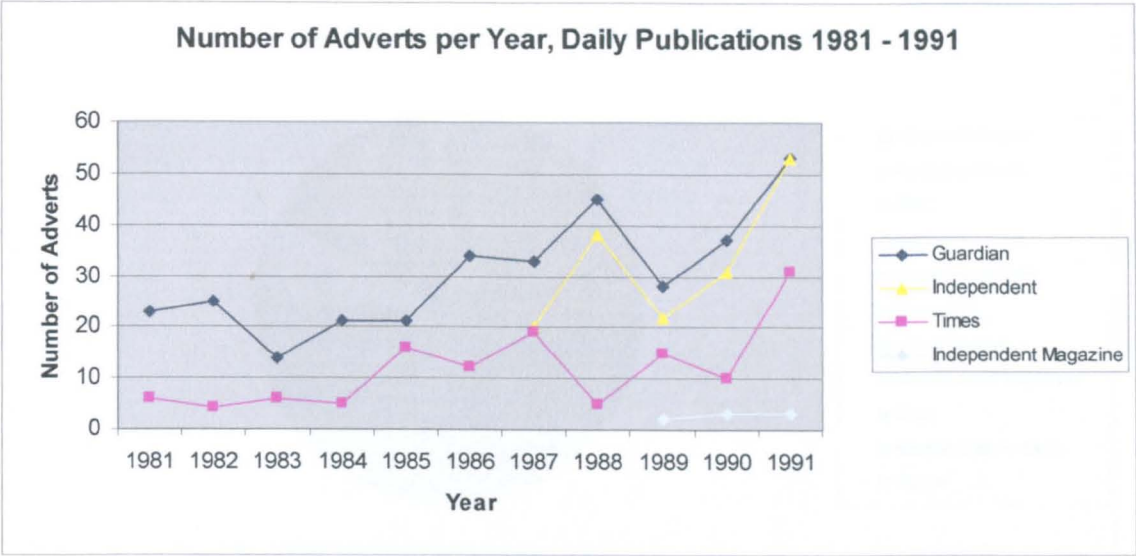
Between 1981 and 1991, 838 music related adverts were identified from the sample of publications included in this study, 635 of which appeared in daily publications and the remaining 203 appeared in Sunday publications. Initially the 838 adverts were broken down simply according to the year in which they were published, the results of which indicated a gradual year on year increase in the number of music-related adverts which appeared between 1981 and 1991 (Fig. 24), excluding a slight decrease in 1989, and a marked increase in the number of music-related adverts in 1991.

Fig. 24



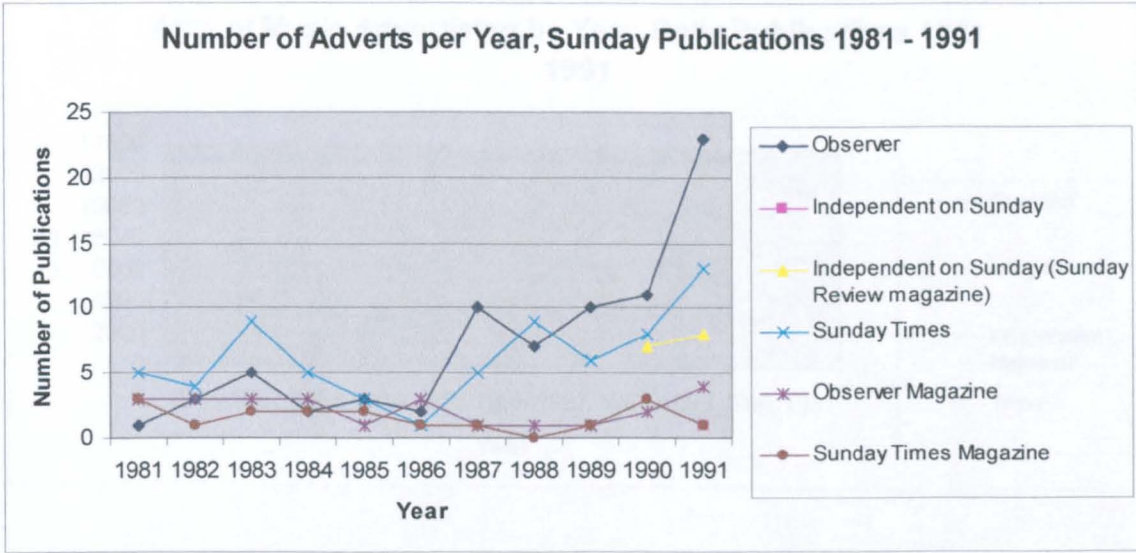
The adverts were then broken down by daily and Sunday publications. In the daily newspapers (Fig. 25) it appeared that *The Times* placed roughly half the number of adverts than its counterpart *The Guardian* across the eleven year period, with the exception of 1985. *The Independent*, upon its entry in 1987, included a similar level of music advertising to *The Times*, but from 1988 onwards the number of music adverts which it contained became more closely aligned to the volumes contained within *The Guardian*; indeed the number of adverts in these two publications were almost identical by 1991. The highest level of music advertising occurred in 1991 and, perhaps most notably, it appeared that by 1991 all of the daily publications included in this study had at least doubled their level of music advertising since 1981 (or 1987 in the case of *The Independent*).

Fig. 25



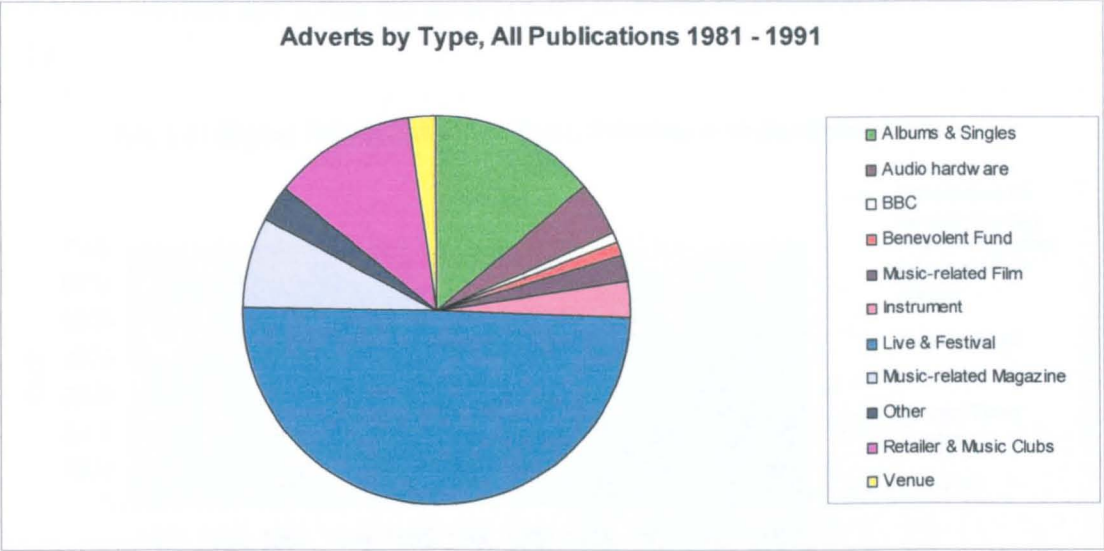
With regards to music advertising in Sunday publications (Fig. 26), the number of adverts remained consistently low across all publications from 1981 to 1986 inclusive, with the exception of a slight peak in *The Sunday Times* in 1983. However, in 1987, *The Observer* doubled the number of adverts it had published in any one of the previous six years and then maintained this increase through to 1991 when the number of music adverts again more than doubled. When *The Independent on Sunday Review Magazine* entered in 1990 it contained a similar number of adverts to *The Sunday Times* and also reflected the upward trend in music advertising leading into 1991.

Fig. 26



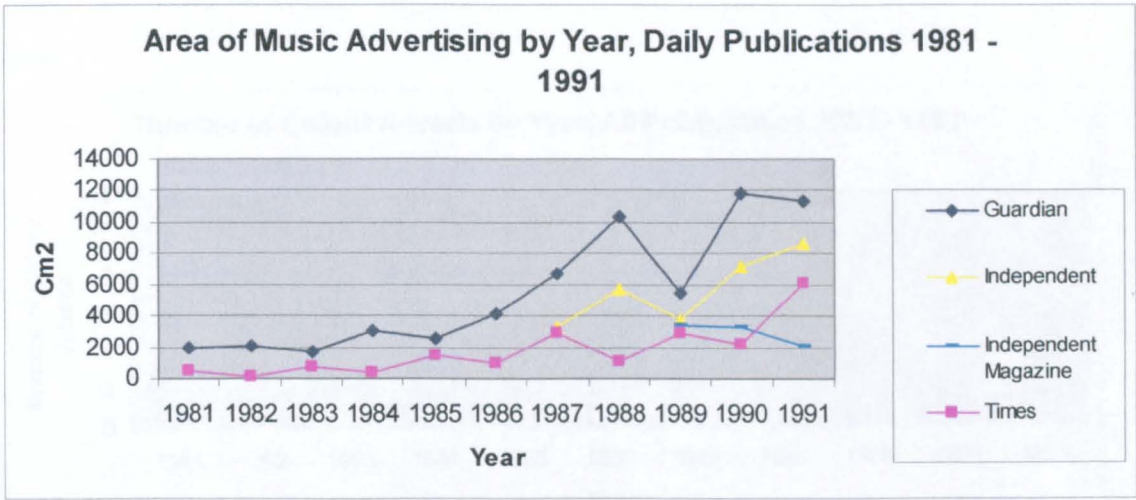
By categorising the subject matter of the different adverts from both the daily and Sunday publications (Fig. 27) it emerged that approximately half were associated with live music events, although high numbers of adverts were also associated with music albums, retailers and magazines.

Fig. 27



In terms of the area of page space occupied by music advertising in the daily newspapers (Fig. 28), it was again possible to observe a roughly upward trend from 1987 onwards, excluding a dip in 1989 in both *The Guardian* and *The Independent*.²⁶⁹ *The Guardian* consistently devoted more page space to music advertising than *The Times*, the latter of which consistently committed the least area to music advertising, whilst the extent of page space devoted to advertising in *The Independent* remained pitched between the two. The level of advertising in *The Independent Magazine* (published on Saturday only) was similar to that printed in *The Times* newspaper in both 1989 and 1990.

Fig. 28

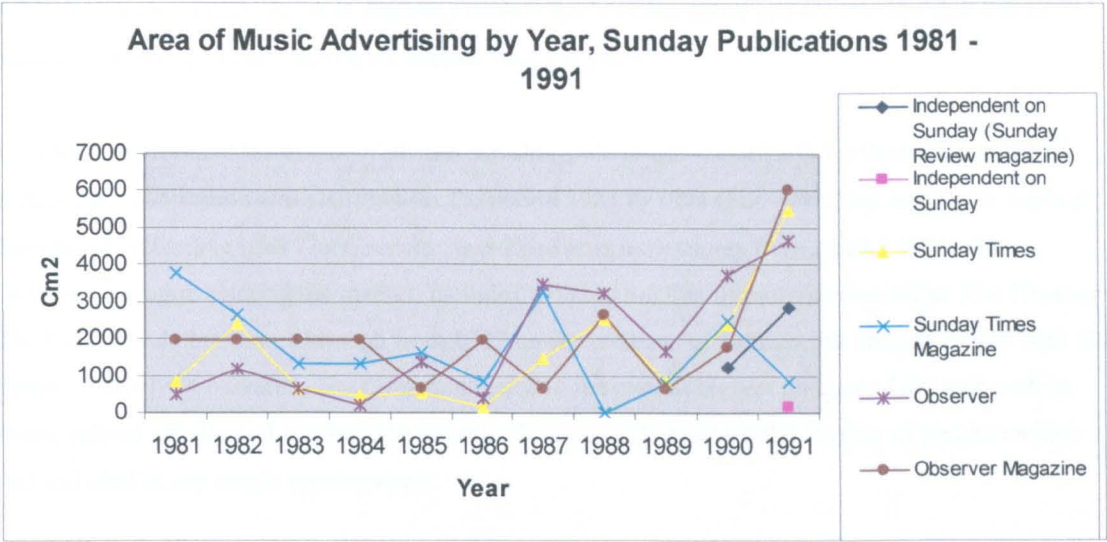


In the Sunday newspapers (Fig. 29), excluding magazines, again a roughly consistent upward trend in the page space devoted to music advertising was observed from 1987 onwards, although with a dip in 1989 as observed in the daily publications. Very little difference was noted between the amount of

²⁶⁹ Note that overall newspaper sizes were not measured and therefore these increases do not take into account relative differences in publication size.

space occupied in *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*, whilst *The Independent on Sunday* consistently committed significantly less space to music advertising than either of the former.

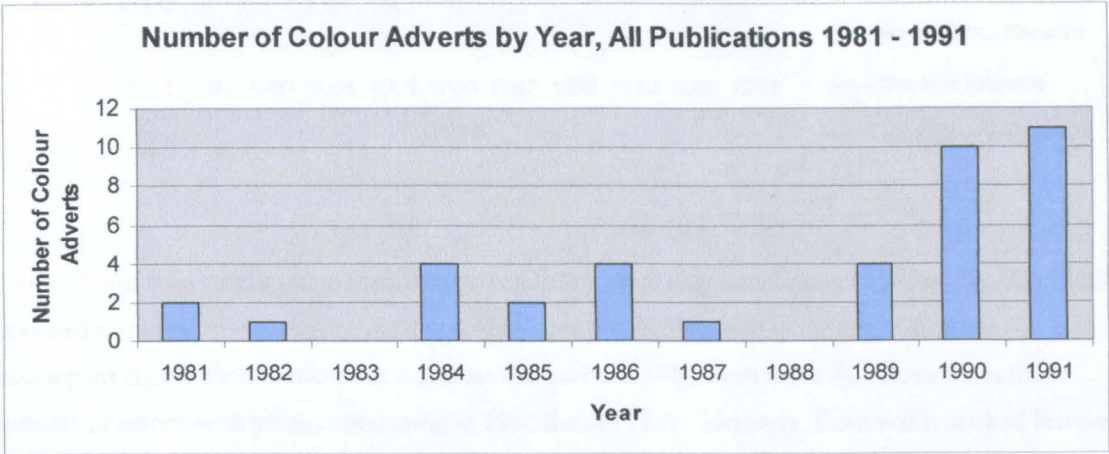
Fig. 29



In relation to the Sunday magazines, page space devoted to music advertising appeared relatively stable over the period, excluding a significant increase in advertising space in the *Observer Magazine* in 1991, with each magazine carrying no more than 4000cm2 per year.

Of the 838 adverts recorded during this period, only 39 were printed in colour, although a noticeable increase in the appearance of colour advertising occurred in 1990 and 1991 but not as a result of a gradual upward trend (Fig. 30).

Fig. 30



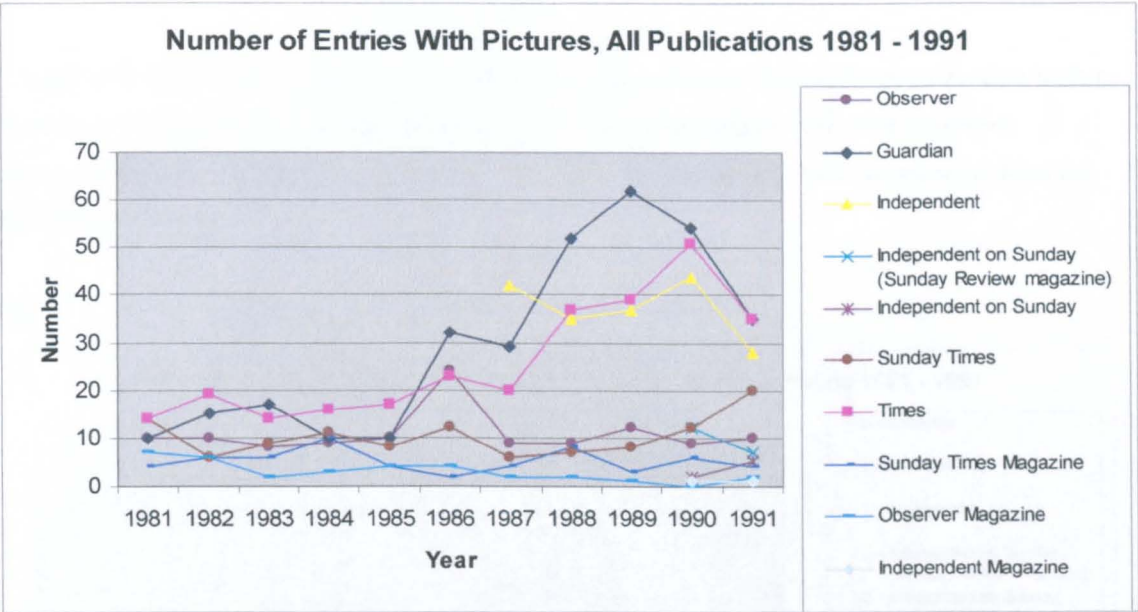
In terms of the location of the colour adverts, only three appeared in daily newspapers (one each in *The Guardian* in 1989 and 1990, and one in *The Times* in 1991), whilst the remainder primarily appeared in the weekend magazines accompanying *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and *The Independent*. No

significant increase or decrease in colour advertising in Sunday publications was identified over the period.

3.2.5. Research question E: Was there any correlation between genre and the number and size of pictures (including photos) across all publications and years?

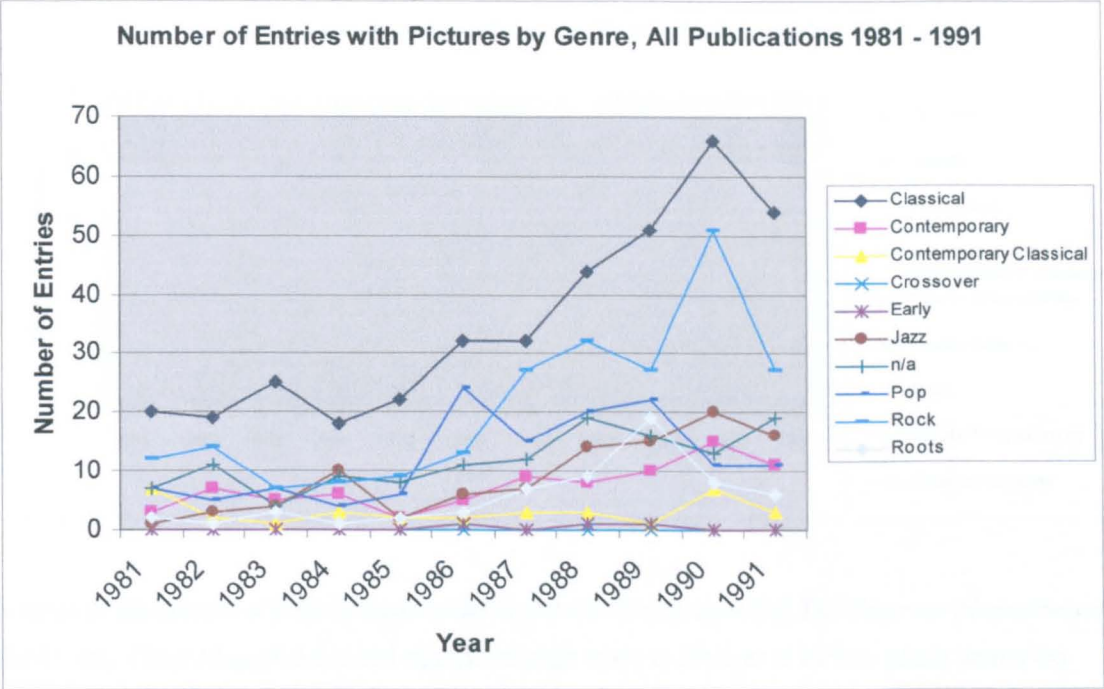
In order to understand the extent of picture use alongside music-related articles the total number of pictures per publication was charted over the period 1981 to 1991 (Fig. 31). This revealed a marked increase in pictures in both *The Guardian* and *The Times* newspapers from around 1986. *The Independent*, upon entering the market, included a higher number of pictures than either *The Times* or *The Guardian* at that time, although from 1987 onwards its use of pictures fell broadly in line with *The Times*. From 1986 onwards, *The Guardian* included the overall highest number of pictures with its music-related articles and in 1991 *The Sunday Times* roughly doubled the number of pictures which it had included in any single previous year.

Fig. 31



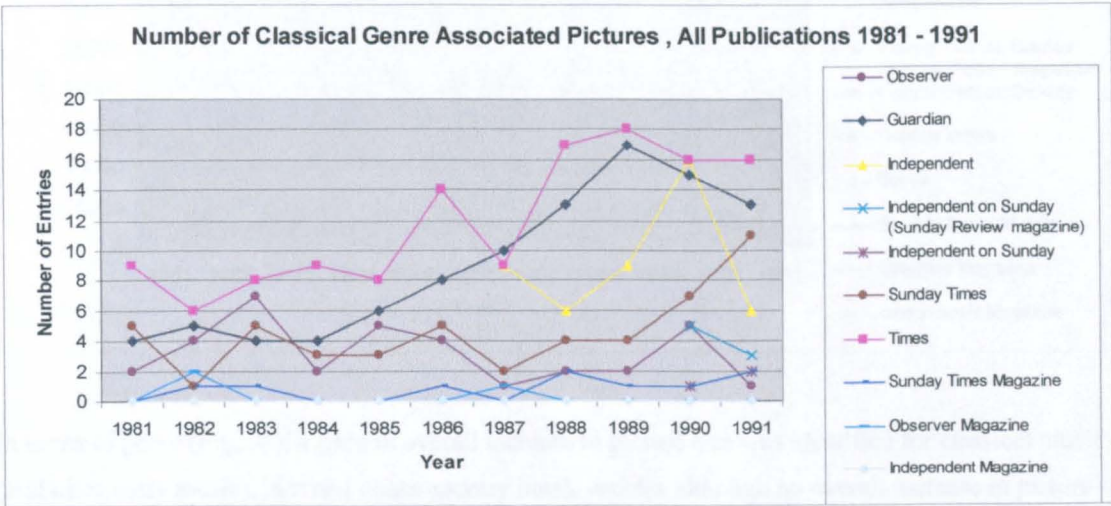
Analysis was then conducted to identify any trends in picture usage according to genre (Fig. 32). This revealed a number of clear shifts, most notably a very distinct increase in the use of pictures accompanying classical music-related articles from around 1986, with more than three times the number of entries with pictures occurring in 1990 than in 1981. Similarly, there was a marked increase in the use of pictures accompanying both rock and pop music articles from around 1987, and an increase in jazz and contemporary music-related pictures from 1988 onwards.

Fig. 32



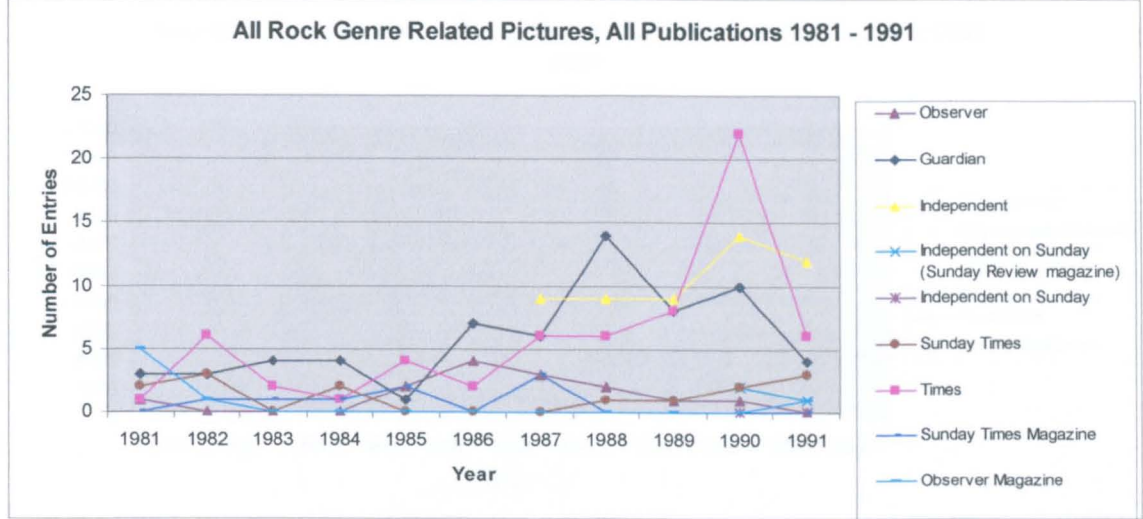
In order to understand the increase in classical music-related pictures further, the pictures were broken down according to publication title and year (Fig. 33) which revealed that the most significant increases had occurred within *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* newspapers from the mid to late 1980s.

Fig. 33



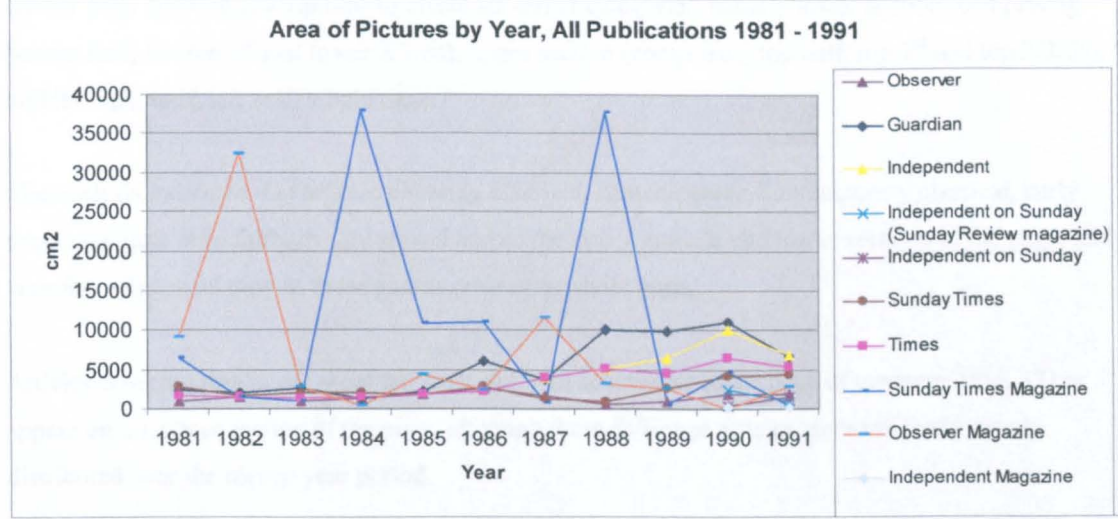
Similarly, a breakdown of the rock music-related pictures was undertaken (Fig. 34) revealing that the most significant increases occurred in *The Guardian* and *The Times* from 1988 to 1990.

Fig. 34



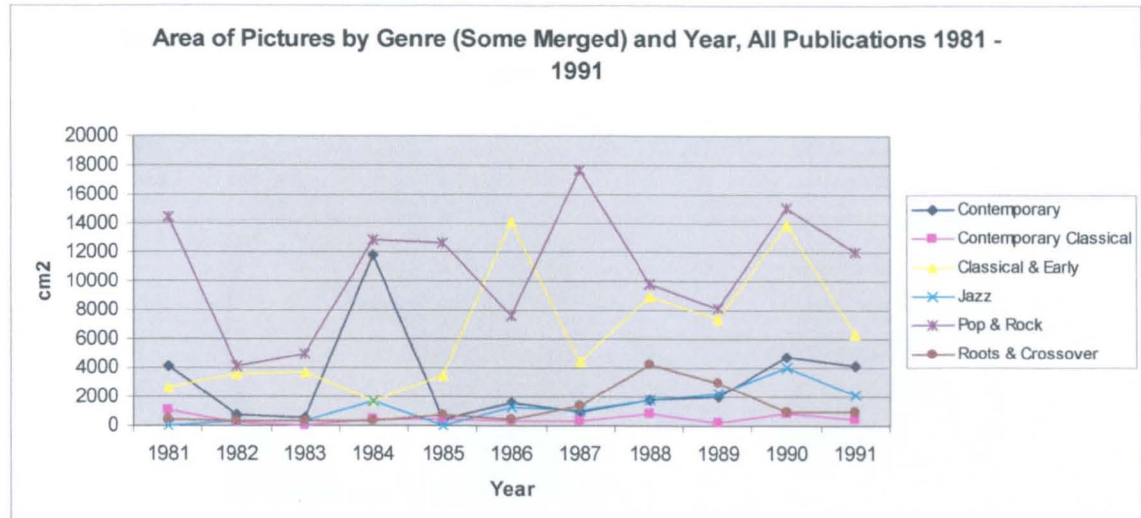
In terms of the amount of page space devoted to pictures, it was clear that *The Observer Magazine* and *The Sunday Times Magazine* devoted significant page space to pictures at various points across the period under review, whilst a general increase in picture space was also identifiable in *The Independent* and *The Guardian* from 1987 onwards (Fig. 35).

Fig. 35



In terms of genre (Fig. 36), a general overall increase in picture size was identified for classical music (including early music), jazz and contemporary music articles although no overall increase in picture size could be discerned for rock or pop related articles over the period (note, some genre groups were merged in order to help illustrate trends more clearly).

Fig. 36



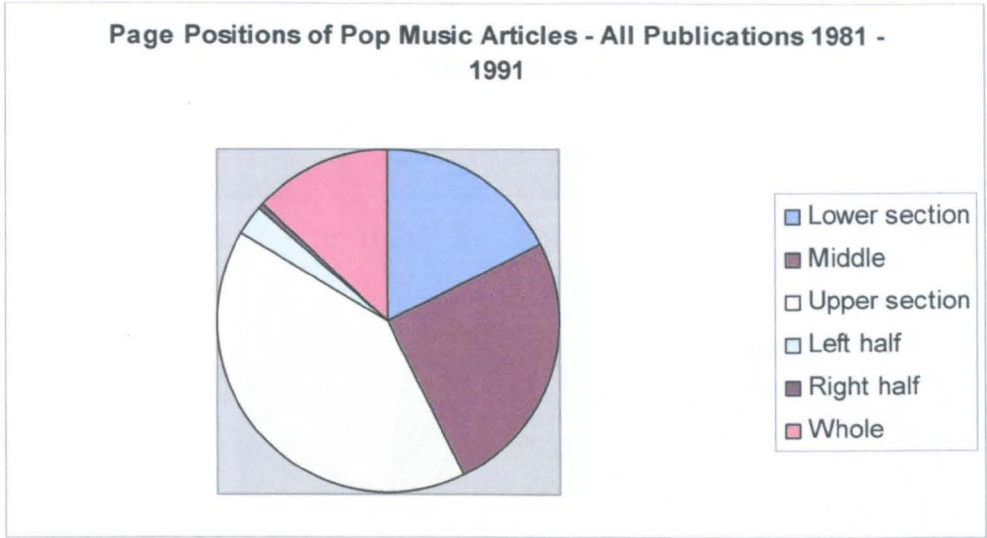
3.2.6. Research question F: Was there any correlation between an article's 'position on the page' and genre?

As the number of articles per genre differed greatly, this analysis was conducted to highlight the proportion of articles, within each genre, appearing on the various parts of the page. Although the database differentiated ten page positions, for analysis purposes it was beneficial to group certain similar page position descriptions to create six larger categories, namely lower section (comprising bottom half, bottom 3rd and lower 2/3rds), upper section (comprising top half, top 3rd and top 2/3rds), middle, right half, left half, whole page.

The analysis indicated that articles covering classical, contemporary, contemporary classical, early music and jazz were fairly evenly spread across the upper, middle and lower sections of the page, and very few articles relating to these genres covered a whole page.

Articles covering pop music were the most likely to achieve an entire page of coverage (Fig. 37) or appear on the upper section of the page, although these full-page articles were relatively evenly distributed over the eleven year period.

Fig. 37



A number of rock and roots music articles also occupied entire pages, however in the majority of cases articles in these genre groups appeared on the upper or middle section of the page (Figs. 38 and 39).

Fig. 38

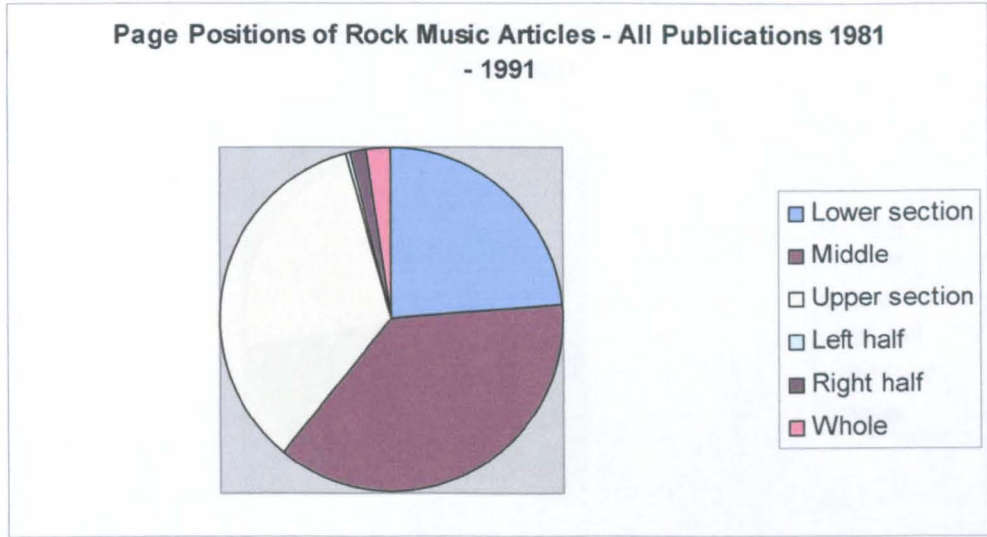
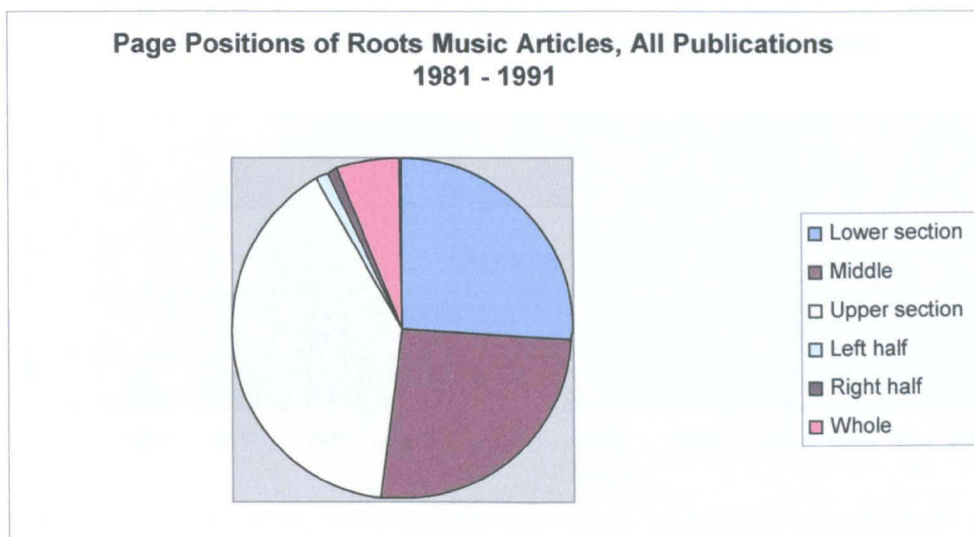
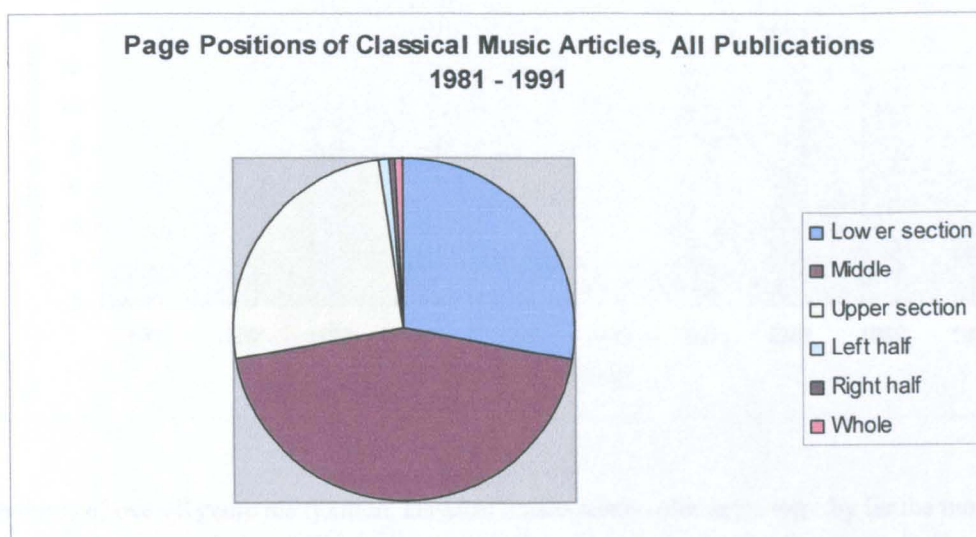


Fig. 39



Classical music articles were relatively evenly placed across the page (Fig. 40), and of the twelve articles which achieved a full page of coverage, all except one appeared in 1986 or later.

Fig. 40



3.2.7. Research question G: How did the appearance and nature of music-related obituaries change over the period under review? With which genre were obituaries most often associated?

A simple quantitative summary of the obituaries contained within the database revealed a general increase in their placement after 1987, even excluding the increase resulting directly from the appearance of *The Independent* (Figs. 41 and 42).

Fig. 41

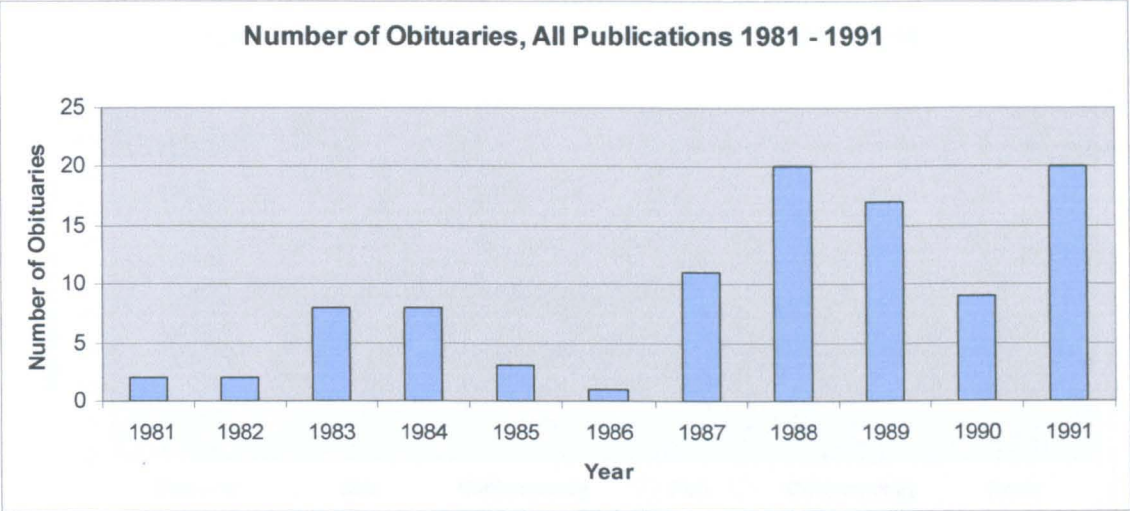
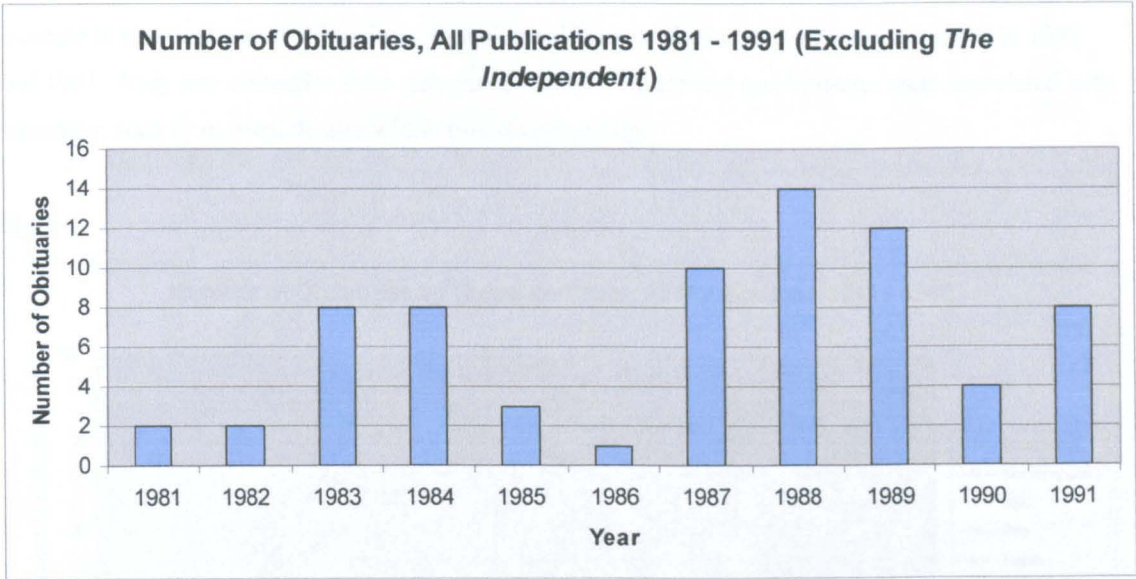
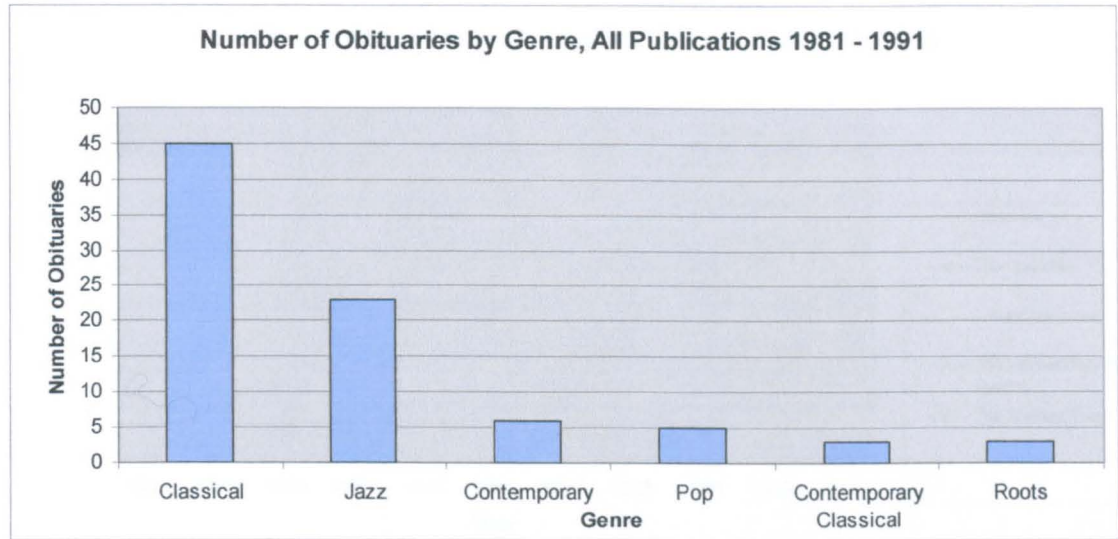


Fig. 42



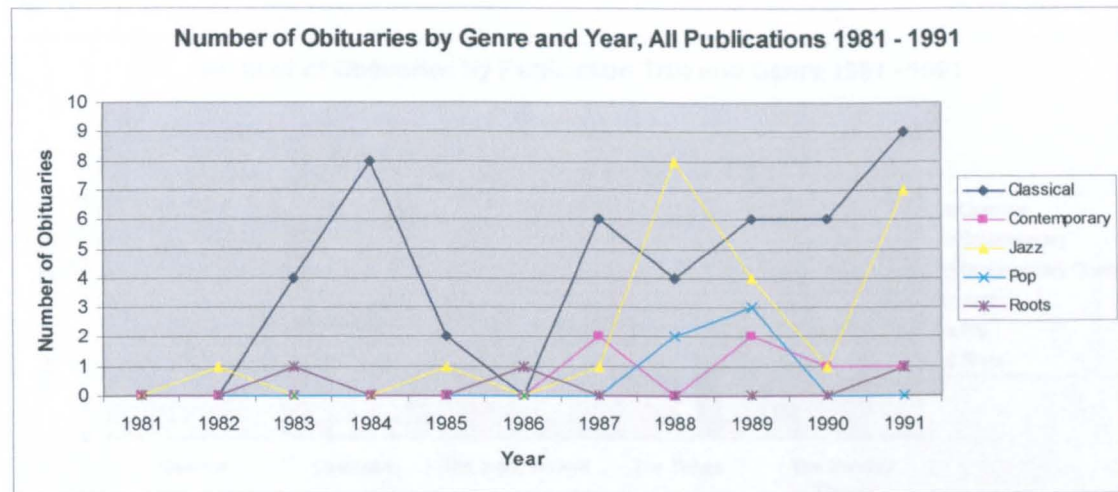
In terms of overall genre distribution, classical music-related obituaries were by far the most frequent, with jazz-related obituaries achieving the second highest level of coverage (Fig. 43).

Fig. 43



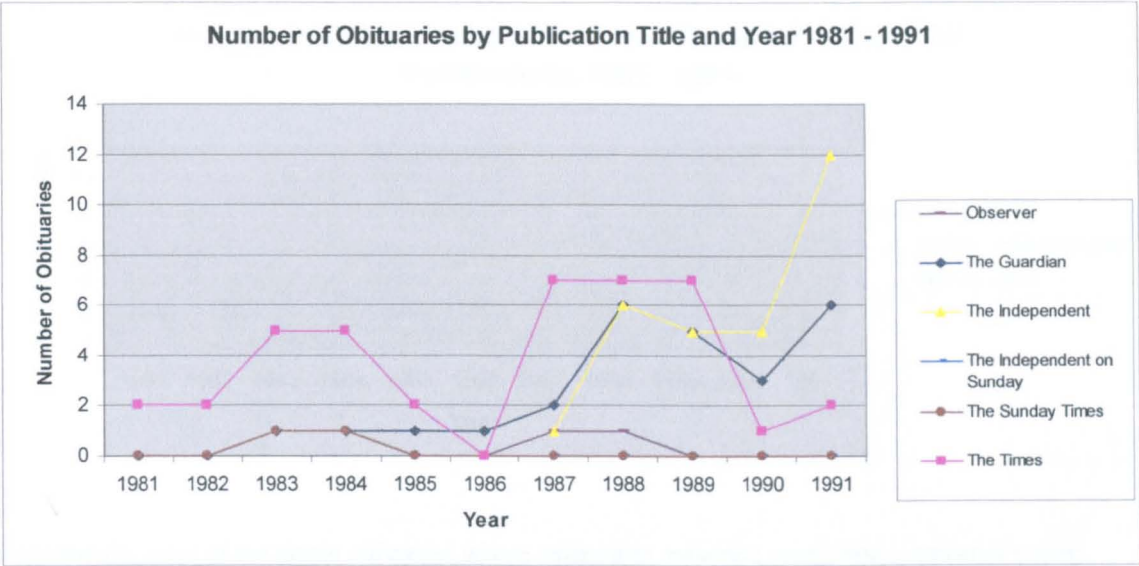
Analysis of the yearly distribution of obituaries by genre (Fig. 44) revealed only an overall general increase in classical music obituaries, although significant peaks in jazz obituaries occurred in 1988 and 1991. Very few obituaries were associated with pop music and no obituaries were associated with crossover, rock or musical theatre within this sample group.

Fig. 44



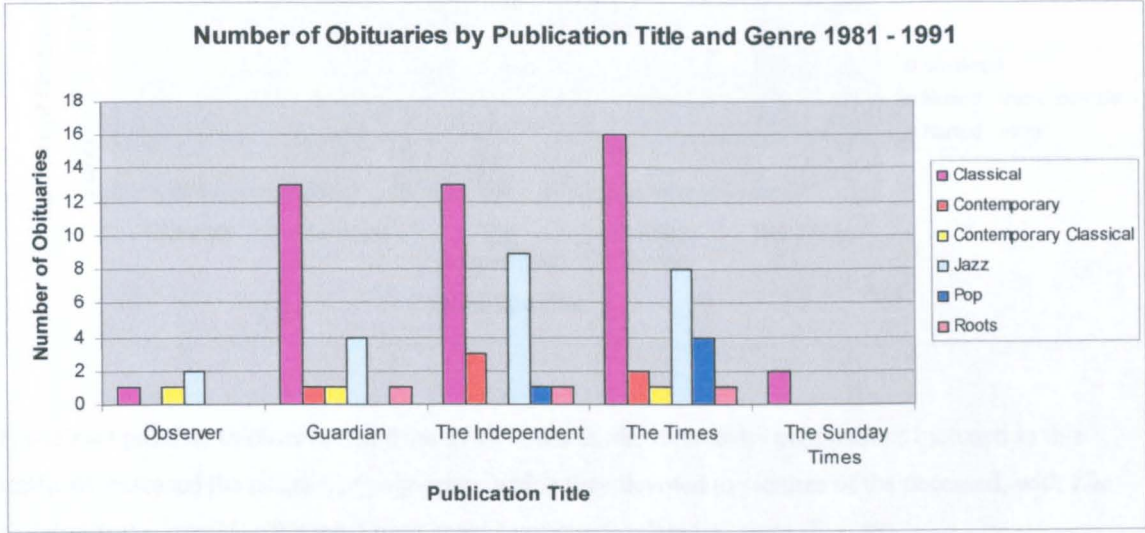
It also emerged that from around 1987 *The Guardian* began to increase the number of music-related obituaries which it published, whilst newcomer *The Independent* published a roughly equal number of obituaries to its two daily counterparts from 1988. Whilst *The Times* had, almost consistently until 1989, carried the highest number of music obituaries, by 1991 it carried far fewer than either *The Guardian* or *The Independent*. Further data would be required to understand if the significant peak in music obituaries in *The Independent* in 1991 represented the beginning of a more permanent increase (Fig. 45).

Fig. 45



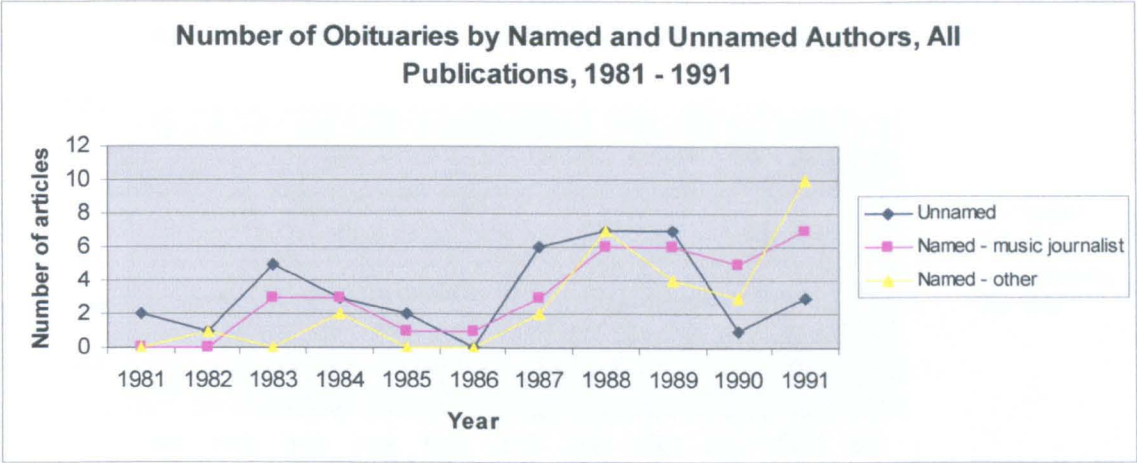
In mapping the total number of music obituaries by genre and publication title (Fig. 46), the most significant findings were that *The Independent*, despite only being in existence for part of the period under review, produced roughly the same number of obituaries as both *The Guardian* and *The Times* over the eleven year period.

Fig. 46



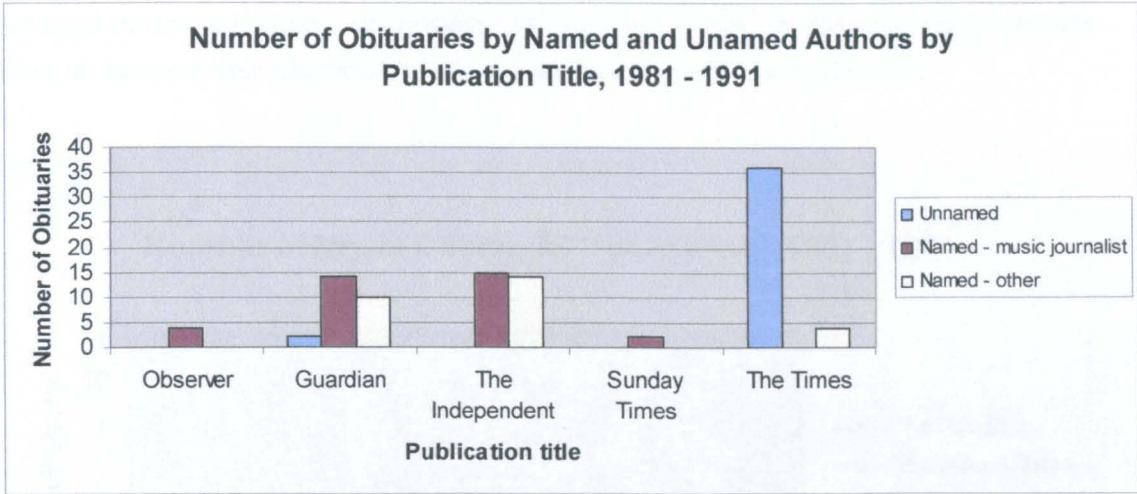
Another significant finding was that over the eleven year period, there was a notable increase in the extent to which music obituaries were attributed to a named author, whether one of the publication's regular music writers or another named author (Fig. 47).

Fig. 47



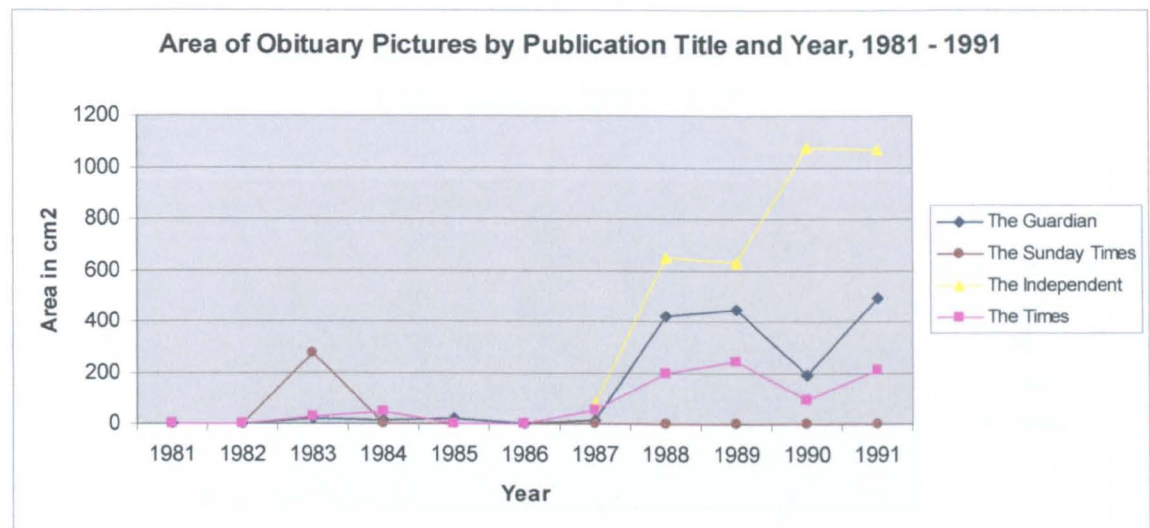
Interestingly, most of the music obituaries whose authorship remained anonymous, appeared within *The Times*, whilst the same publication seemed not to attribute any music obituaries to their regular music writers (Fig. 48).

Fig. 48



It was also possible to observe that from 1988 onwards, the three daily publications included in this study all increased the amount of page space which they devoted to pictures of the deceased, with *The Independent* committing the most page space to obituary-related pictures (Fig. 49).

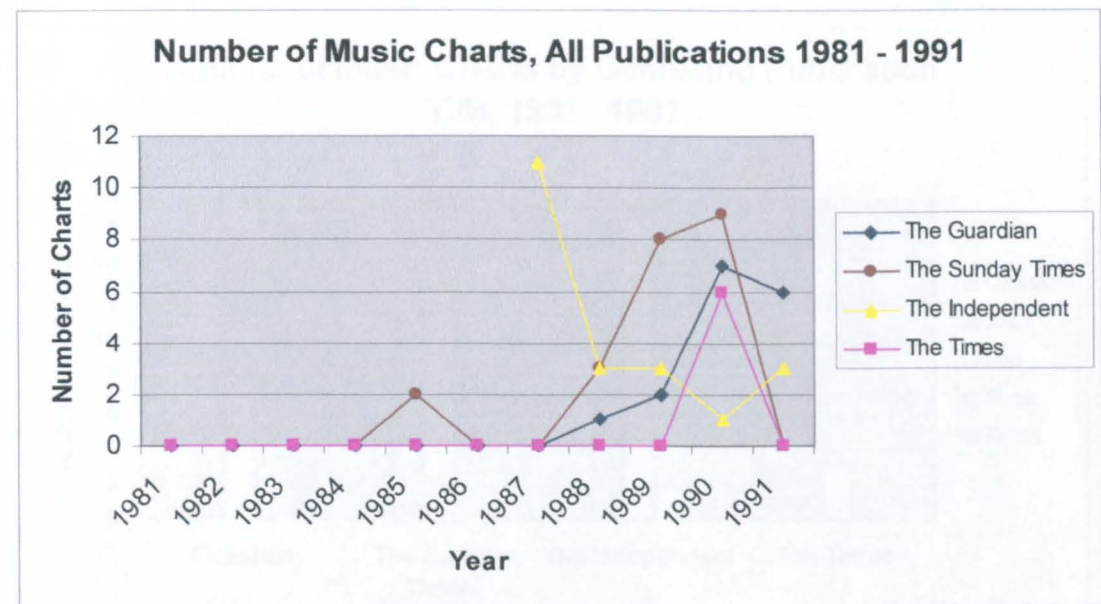
Fig. 49



3.2.8. Research question H: When did music ‘charts’ and ‘competitions’ appear in the broadsheet press and where, and to which genres were they associated?

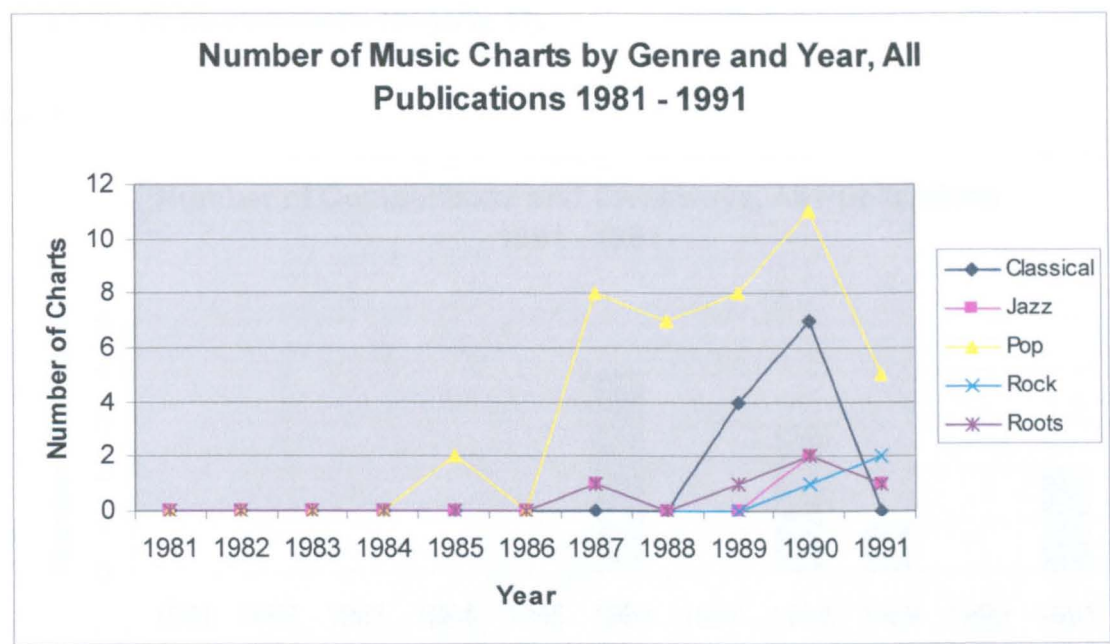
Until 1987 only two music charts appeared in the sample group. However, in 1987 *The Independent* published eleven music charts, and thereafter both *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian* and in 1990 *The Times* all increased their publication of such content during the latter 1980s (Fig. 50).

Fig. 50



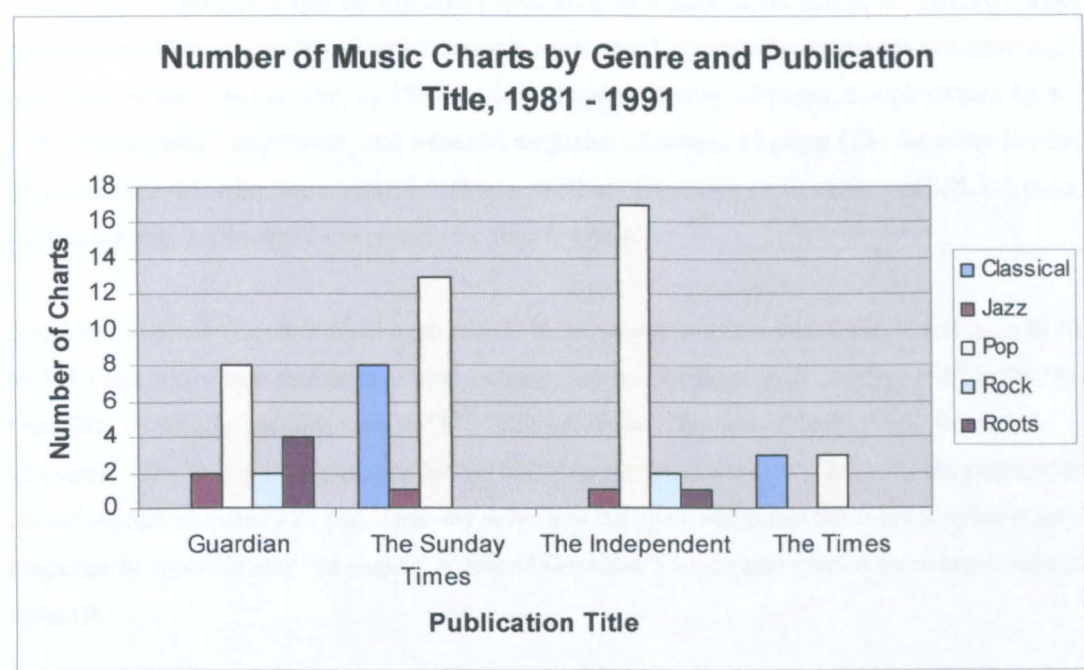
In determining the genre breakdown of the music charts shown above, it emerged that most were associated with pop music (Fig. 51), although from the late 1980s onwards charts appeared which related to a broader spectrum of genres.

Fig. 51



In determining the genre distribution of the music charts across the publications, it emerged that *The Independent* published mostly pop music charts, whilst only *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* published classical music charts. *The Guardian* provided more evenly distributed genre coverage in the charts which it published (Fig. 52).

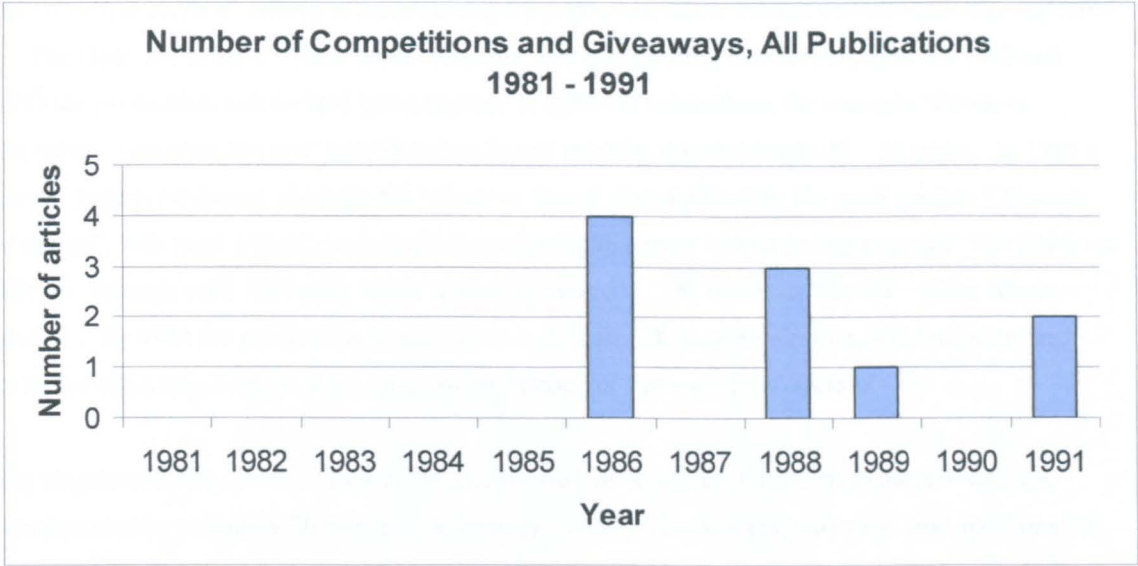
Fig. 52



Ten competitions or giveaways were recorded in the database, all occurring from 1986 onwards, eight of which were associated with pop music, one of which was associated with rock, whilst the other

related to musical hardware. Nine of the competitions occurred in *The Observer Review Magazine* and one appeared in *The Guardian* (in 1991) (Fig. 53).

Fig. 53



3.2.9. Research question I: How did the size (total pages) of each newspaper and their dedicated arts coverage space change across the period 1981 - 1991?

A significant increase in the size and make-up of (each) publication was noted during the period under review. *The Times* newspaper for example increased from a publication which, in 1981, comprised around 24 to 30 pages per day of which a single page would typically be devoted to arts coverage, to a newspaper whose main section, by 1991, contained approximately 24 pages, complemented by an additional weekday supplement, and weekend magazine of around 52 pages (*The Saturday Review*), from around 1985, with music related content sometimes appearing on two pages of both the main publication and the weekend magazine, (i.e. four in total).

Similarly, whereas *The Guardian* began as a 20 to 30 page newspaper with a single arts page in 1981, by 1986 music coverage appeared in new sections such as 'Weekend Arts', and by 1987 in the 'Arts Guardian' containing sections such as 'The Friday Review', 'Records - Rock, Pop', 'Records – Classical', 'The Friday Preview', and by in 1988 'The Review Guardian'. By 1991 the publication comprised approximately 24 pages per day accompanied by an additional Saturday supplementary magazine of approximately 48 pages ('Weekend Guardian') which also carried some music related material.

The Independent from 1987 had a weekday arts page but particularly emphasised music coverage on its Friday 'Music' page. The publication expanded from a newspaper which in 1987 typically comprised between 24 and 34 pages to a publication which from around 1990 comprised approximately 26 to 40 pages attended by a sizable supplement, e.g. of 27 additional pages on a

Saturday (e.g. 10/03/1990), including 'The Independent Weekend', 'Classical Music/ Collectors Choice', 'Classical Music/ Reviews'.

The Observer in 1981 comprised of a main publication of approximately 28 pages complemented by the 'Observer Review' section of an additional 20 pages, and music-related material typically appeared in 'The Observer Review – Arts/ Music/Records' section spanning one or two pages. In 1982 and 1983 the publication had divided into a number of different subsections, for example 'Observer Business', 'Observer Review' and 'Observer Sport' totalling approximately 48 – 52 pages. In 1984 a similar pattern continued, although the 'Observer Sport' was replaced by the more generic 'Observer Weekend', with most critical music content continuing to appear on one or two pages of 'The Observer Review' through until 1985 after which it often appeared in 'The Observer Review – More Music section'. By 1991 the publication had grown to a typically 78 page publication, with music-related coverage often appearing on three pages of the 'Observer Review - Arts' section.

The structure of *The Sunday Times* in 1981 comprised an approximately 32 page main newspaper accompanied by a roughly 20 page supplementary 'Sunday Times Weekly Review' and additional 20 page 'Sunday Times business news' (e.g. 01/03/1981), with most music content printed in the first of these supplements and appearing on two or more pages, although not necessarily two full pages. By 1991, the supplements had expanded to the extent that it contained seven separate sections with music content appearing in the fifth of these sections, namely 'The Sunday Times Review' and spanning more than ten pages (e.g. 03/03/1991).

The main body of *The Independent on Sunday*, beginning in 1990 and changing little through to 1991, tended to comprise approximately 28 – 32 pages, with a separate 'Sunday Review' glossy magazine of in excess of 50 pages (e.g. 17/03/1991) and an additional 'Business on Sunday' glossy magazine, again of more than 50 pages. Most critical music coverage appeared in the 'First Night' section of the main paper or in the 'Sunday Review – Arts' section and appeared on more than five separate pages (e.g. 17/03/1991).

3.2.10. Research question J: Did the number of words devoted to music reviews decrease during the period 1981 - 1991?

At the time of data entry, music reviews recorded in the database were not distinguished as overnight performance reviews, recording reviews, single, album or multiple reviews and therefore comparable groups within this category, for the purpose of assessing detailed average word counts, were not attainable.

However, despite these inherent limitations, analysis of the information contained within the database suggested that the average number of estimated words per music review, per year, for each of the

authors who participated in this study, did not universally decrease (Figs. 54 and 55) and indeed a degree of consistency was noted in relation reviews authored by Paul Griffiths, Robin Denselow (before 1987) and Tom Sutcliffe (before 1986). Some subtle overall decreases could be seen in relation to the reviews authored by Hilary Finch (at least between 1984 and 1989) and Dave Gelly (after 1985), however evidence of increased average wordage per review also came to light, as in the case of rock and pop writers Robert Sandall (after 1986), Robin Denselow (between 1987 and 1989 inclusive) and David Sinclair (after 1989).

Fig. 54

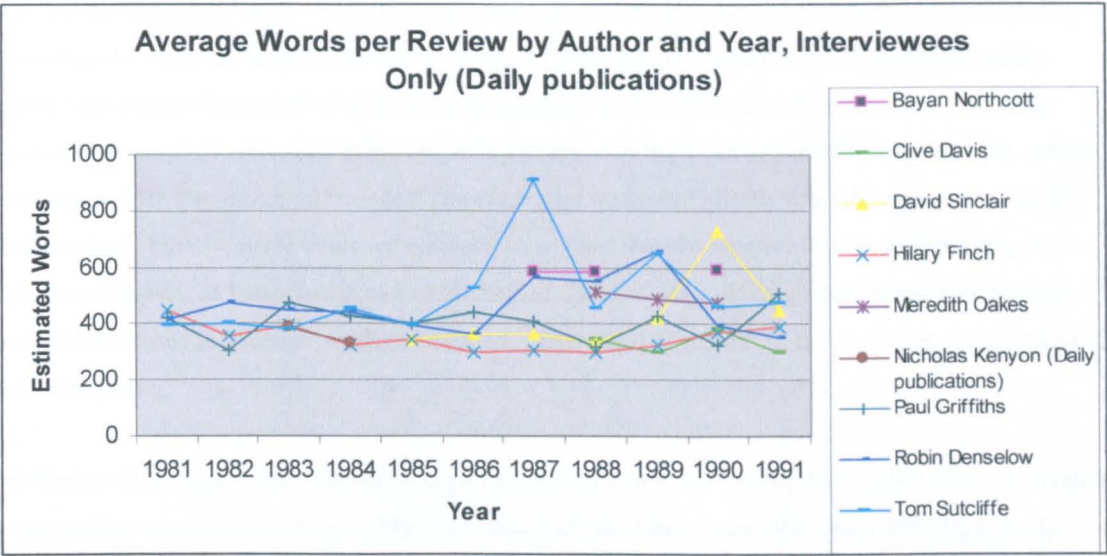
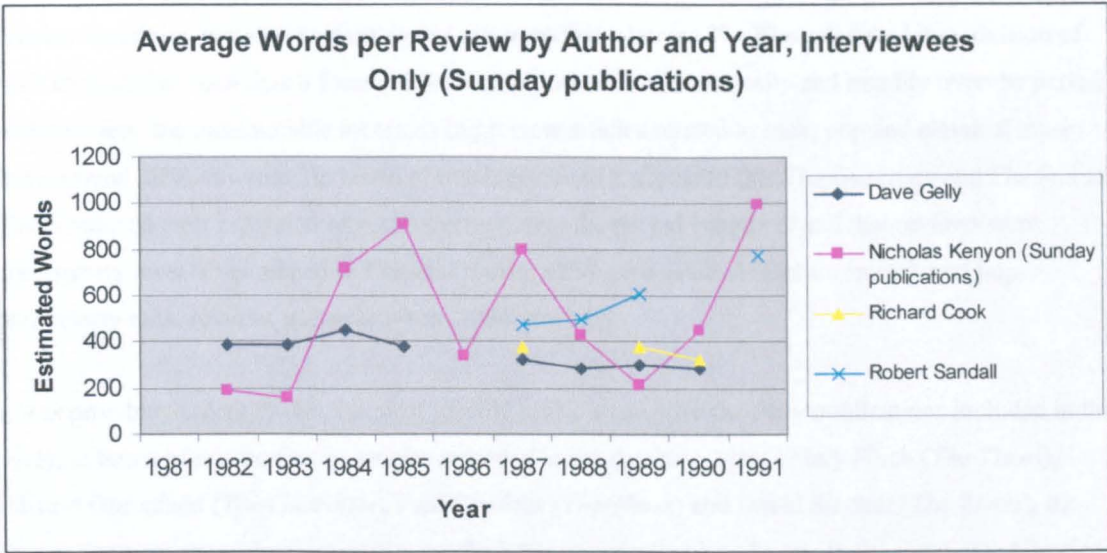


Fig. 55



3.3 Summary

The evidence gathered here suggests that, certainly within this sample group, several quantifiable shifts occurred in the nature of broadsheet music coverage between 1981 and 1991, as outlined below.

In terms of the wordage devoted to each genre, this research has indicated a distinctive year on year decrease in the number of words devoted to classical music in *The Times* newspaper between 1981 and 1991, such that coverage had almost halved by 1991, in stark contrast to an approximately eight-fold increase in rock music coverage in that publication over the same period, with wordage peaking in 1990. A decline in classical, and also contemporary, music wordage was also noted in *The Observer* over the same period. Until 1987, rock and pop music wordage appeared relatively stable, with *The Guardian* devoting the highest number of words to these genres, however once *The Independent* entered the market the extent of rock and pop coverage in *The Times* and *The Guardian* generally increased above the levels seen in the preceding years. Similarly, an increase in contemporary music wordage in both *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian* was noted shortly after the appearance of *The Independent*. Finally, some evidence emerged to suggest that the length of music reviews may have decreased slightly, at least during part of the period under review, although conversely evidence of possible increases in average wordage emerged, particularly in respect of rock and pop reviews during the latter 1980s.

In relation to the types of article which appeared, a significant increase in the number of music-related event guides was observed in both *The Guardian* and *The Times* from 1987 and 1988 respectively, with a distinct increase in the number of event guides relating to rock, pop, jazz and classical music appearing from 1986 onwards, and roots music from 1987 onwards. It was also clear that feature articles most frequently related to the rock and pop genres, throughout the period observed, and that newcomer *The Independent* generally published the highest number of such articles. In charting all articles containing preview content, it was apparent that whereas *The Times* reduced its provision of such content *The Guardian's* focus on previewing increased dramatically and steadily over the period under review; the most notable increases in preview articles related to rock, pop and classical music from around 1988 onwards. In terms of music reviews, it appeared that *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times* reduced their provision of such coverage over the period examined and that reviews were consistently most often related to classical music, although a gradual increase in rock and pop, particularly rock, reviews was noted from 1986 onwards.

It was possible to identify that the most prolific music writers for the daily publications included in this study, in terms of the number of articles recorded in the database, were Hilary Finch (*The Times*), Edward Greenfield (*The Guardian*), Paul Griffiths (*The Times*) and David Sinclair (*The Times*), the former three covering classical music and the latter covering rock and pop. In the Sunday publications Felix Aprahamian (*The Sunday Times*), Simon Frith (*The Sunday Times*), Dave Gelly (*The Observer*), David Cairns (*The Sunday Times*) and Desmond Shawe-Taylor (*The Sunday Times*) emerged as the most frequent contributors during the period examined who collectively covered classical music, rock

and jazz. Of the authors who contributed to both a daily and Sunday publication, the highest number of entries were attributed to Richard Williams (*The Times* and *The Independent on Sunday*), Nicholas Kenyon (*The Observer*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*), Michael White (*The Independent*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Guardian* and *The Observer Magazine*) and John Fordham (*The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times Magazine*), again spanning the classical, rock and jazz genres. In identifying the most prolific writers, according to the estimated number of words printed, many of the above named authors reappeared with the addition of Robin Denselow (rock, pop, roots music – *The Guardian*) and Tom Sutcliffe (classical music – *The Guardian*), Peter Heyworth (Classical, contemporary music - *The Observer*), Robert Sandall (rock, pop and contemporary music - *The Sunday Times*), Paul Driver (classical and contemporary music – *The Sunday Times*) and Hugh Canning (classical and contemporary music - *The Guardian*, *The Observer Magazine*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Times Magazine*).

A significant shift in the nature of broadsheet music advertising was also identified. The analysis revealed an upward trend in the appearance of music adverts, such that by 1991 all daily publications had at least doubled their levels of music advertising compared with 1981 (or 1987 in the case of *The Independent*). It emerged that *The Guardian* printed roughly twice the number of music adverts than *The Times* across the majority of the eleven year period examined, whilst *The Independent*, despite displaying levels of advertising similar to *The Times* in 1987, from 1988 onwards more closely mirrored levels of music advertising within *The Guardian*; indeed the number of adverts in these two publications were almost identical by 1991. A distinct increase in the appearance of colour advertising was noted in 1990 and 1991, with the majority of colour adverts appearing in the weekend magazines accompanying *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and *The Independent*.

Upon entering the market, *The Independent* appears to have attached a greater number of pictorial illustrations to music-related articles than either *The Times* or *The Guardian* in any of the preceding years. Subsequently, from 1988 onwards, both *The Times* and *The Guardian* increased their inclusion of music-related pictures such that by 1991 *The Independent* and *The Times* contained broadly similar levels of illustration. A particularly distinctive increase in the number of pictures accompanying classical music-related articles was observed from around 1986, with more than three times the number of entries accompanied by pictures in 1990 than seen in 1981, with the most significant increases in this respect occurring within *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. A marked increase in the use of pictures accompanying rock and pop related articles was also observed, particularly in *The Guardian* and *The Times* between 1988 and 1990, and an increase in jazz and contemporary music-related pictures was noted from 1988 onwards. The greatest area of page space devoted to pictorial illustrations occurred within the *Observer Magazine* and *Sunday Times Magazine*, although *The Independent* and *The Guardian* both expanded their levels of picture space from 1987 onwards. In line with the genre-based findings relating to the number of pictures which appeared, the space devoted to pictures increased in relation to classical music (including early music), jazz and contemporary music articles during the period examined, although seemingly not in relation to rock and pop coverage.

After examining the page positions of articles within the database according to genre, it emerged that texts concerning pop music were most likely to achieve an entire page of coverage or appear upon the upper section of the page. Whilst several rock and roots music articles also occupied whole pages, articles in these genre groups most frequently appeared on the upper or middle section of the page. Classical, contemporary, contemporary classical, early music and jazz articles were all relatively evenly spread across the various page positions, although interestingly relatively few articles from these genre groups covered a whole page.

Between 1987 and 1989 inclusive, a distinct increase in the incidence of music-related obituaries was observed. Between 1981 and 1985 inclusive *The Times* consistently published the most music-related obituaries, however by 1990 *The Independent* displayed the highest incidence of such articles and, from 1988, also consistently devoted the most page space to obituary-related pictures. Interestingly, *The Times* and *The Guardian* increased both the quantity of music obituaries which they published, and the amount of page space devoted to pictures of the deceased, after the arrival of *The Independent*. Most frequently, obituaries were associated with classical music, closely followed by jazz, and the extent to which music obituaries were attributed to named authors increased from around 1988 onwards.

Only two music charts appeared in the sample group in the period up to 1987, however in 1987 *The Independent* published eleven music charts, and thereafter both *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian* and in 1990 *The Times* all increased their inclusion of music charts. Most music charts concerned pop music, although from the late 1980s charts referred to broader spectrum of genres. Of the ten competitions or giveaways recorded in the database, all from 1986 onwards, most were associated with pop music and all but one appeared in *The Observer Review Magazine*.

The comparison of newspaper sizes at the beginning and end of the period under review revealed significant increases in the size of each publication (with the exception *The Independent on Sunday*, included in this study from 1990 onwards) and the evolution of regular themed supplements. The space devoted to music coverage also expanded, typically from a slot on a single arts page to the occupation of more than ten separate pages in some instances, indicating a dramatic increase in the extent of music coverage, at least within this sample of broadsheets, across the period 1981 to 1991.

Chapter 4 – Qualitative Analysis of Newspaper Articles

4.1 Introduction

Having considered the quantitative results of the database analysis, this chapter presents a qualitative content analysis of a sample of broadsheet music review articles listed within the database, drawn from the beginning, middle and end of the period under review, i.e. 1981, 1987 and 1991 respectively. A series of 38 tables were created and individually numbered (Appendix U), each containing the content analysis of one corresponding sample article (Appendix V), arranged chronologically and by genre group namely i) Classical, Early, Contemporary and Contemporary Classical, ii) Rock and Pop, iii) Jazz, iv) Roots. Where excerpts from the analysis tables appear in the remainder of this chapter, they are followed by their corresponding table (T) number from Appendix U, and the range of appendix numbers applicable to each genre category is also indicated at the beginning of each section.

Seven categories were devised to form the basis of the content analysis, their section references, definitions and the hypotheses for each category, the latter deriving from the journalist interview outcomes (see Chapter 5 with associated appendices, and footnotes shown in this chapter) and literature review findings, are shown below:

Table 3. Overview of content analysis and hypotheses

Category, and section reference	Definition applied during analysis	Hypothesis
4.2.1 Technical and musicological terminology	Terminology, whether generalised or specialised, directly associated with music as a subject.	That the extent of specialised musical terminology decreased between 1981 and 1991 across all genre groups and publications. ²⁷⁰
4.2.2 Background information	Contextual or background details about the composers, performers or repertoire.	That by 1991 some increase in the incidence of background information would be observed across all genres as broadsheets increasingly wanted to enable less specialised readers access their music-related content.
4.2.3 Music Referencing (Internal and external)	Reference to either a) names of composers, performers, conductors, titles of works etc pertinent to the performance under review b) other named music,	a) That classical music writers devoted a greater number of words to 'naming' by virtue of the performance modes associated with the genre. b) That by 1991 fewer references to other

²⁷⁰ Based on the interview results which suggested an increasing editorial demand for accessible writing, see Chapter 5, 'The Golden Age and Narratives of Decline' (5.2.6, pp. 163-171).

	musicians or venues etc external to the performance under review.	music, musicians and venues would be observed as broadsheet writers increasingly tried to avoid deterring casual readers.
4.2.4 Reference to the audience	Reference to any characteristics of the audience of the music being discussed.	That whilst audiences for classical music were taken for granted and thus rarely referred to, such references would be more prevalent among rock and pop articles as the public face of audiences for these genres was in transition ²⁷¹ and the performance conventions associated with certain kinds of popular music attract particular audience responses, e.g. singing along, clapping, call and response, banter between songs, demanding an encore.
4.2.5 Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or descriptions	Either solely objective anecdotal content or evaluative statements or descriptions of the performance and music heard.	That authors across all genres included objective or anecdotal material, whilst both jazz and classical music critics offered fewer value judgements than their rock and pop counterparts in light of 1) the improvised nature of jazz ²⁷² and 2) the tendency of classical performances to be singular, non-repeating events, some of which being publicly funded, whose critics may therefore have wished to avoid criticism of English culture per se. In contrast, rock and pop writers may have dispensed value judgements more freely in light of the more openly opinionated tradition of rock writing found in the specialist music press.

²⁷¹ During the interviews it was suggested that the emergence of *Q* magazine and the occurrence of Live Aid demonstrated that it was no longer appropriate to consider rock and pop music as the exclusive concern of the youth-directed specialist music press, but that older audiences for these genres existed who were interested in reading about such music. See in particular David Sinclair: “*Q* reconnected a generation of readers whose interests in pop and rock had lapsed, and that in turn triggered an interest amongst general readers of broadsheet newspapers” (5.2.4, p. 155), and Robert Sandall: “it was the age of the people who’d grown up with it, suddenly everyone became slightly more retrospective in their approach...the past suddenly came steaming back into the present again which it hadn’t for quite a while, and that had a big effect on obviously the way that people such as myself wrote, and the entire orientation of people’s attitude towards popular music” (5.2.4, p. 161).

²⁷² See in particular comments by Clive Davis: “but in jazz it’s much more fluid and you don’t know if that man really meant to play that flat note, so people are very wary about passing judgement” (5.2.1, p. 139).

4.2.6 Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author led commentary	Phrases of a more subjective, elaborate or convoluted nature than those in the above category, particularly those including metaphorical language, and phrases which are distinctly author centric. The phrases may or may not correspond directly to the performance or music heard.	That a more learned writing style was adopted by some classical broadsheet music critics (by virtue of their formal musical training and/or higher education) and that at least some rock and pop writers adopted a more flamboyant, embellished, idiosyncratic style or writing in order to reflect the modes of writing adopted by specialist rock press writers during the 1970s.
4.2.7 Other content	Content which does not easily fit into one of the above categories or which seems appropriate to treat separately for analysis purposes.	None.

Within each analysis table (relating to a single article) every phrase or term was placed into one of the above categories (contained within square brackets and listed in order of appearance). Where a phrase or term fitted into more than one category it was duplicated and represented in multiple categories, however this occurred only rarely and most often arose in relation to phrases containing musicological or technical terminology. However, where a musicological or technical term was repeated within a single article it was only included once.

After the content analysis of individual articles was completed a comparative analysis was undertaken to identify any trends within and across each of the publications, genres and years. The key observations from the analysis are summarised in section 4.2, and a comparison of the results against the original hypotheses is presented in section 4.3. A copy of the first newspaper article and its analysis table are provided below for illustrative purposes:

Table 4 - Content analysis of sample article

RPO/ Weller. Festival Hall. Paul Griffiths
The Times, 16/3/1981, p11

Technical and musicological terminology	[concert] [second piano concerto] [scoring] [solo] [accompaniment] [passages] [oboe] [cello] [chamber musician] [piano] [keyboard] [march] [Finale] [virtuosity] [upper register] [pedal resonance] [keys] [waltz] [the work] [symphony] [instrument] [orchestration] [woodwind] [keep exact time] [orchestra] [beat] [interpretation]
Background information	[<i>Prince Igor</i> , on which Rimsky had been working at the time]
Music referencing	a) [<i>Sheherezade</i>] [Walter Weller and the Royal Philharmonic] [<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>] [Liszt's second piano concerto] [Liszt] [Garrick Ohlsson's] [Finale] [Strauss] [Rimsky-Korsakov] b) [Rather as in Borodin's <i>Prince Igor</i>]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[It was not a night for musical exquisites. As if <i>Sheherezade</i> were not sufficient a feast of the flashy and showy for one programme, Walter Weller and the Royal Philharmonic chose to begin their concert yesterday evening with <i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>] [The Liszt was also welcome in other ways. It's scoring seemed a masterpiece of delicacy, and this was due not only to the context but also to Garrick Ohlsson's willingness to let the solo part become an accompaniment when necessary] [particularly in those passages where he was alone with an oboe or a cello, he showed the sensitivity of a chamber musician, though indeed there was a pleasant lack of egoism throughout his performance, a disinclination to accept the obvious role of piano chauvinist] [were not flashy, but tight, disciplined and thoroughly exhilarating] [and everywhere Mr Ohlsson did what he could to place his virtuosity at the service of purely musical brilliance] [Mr Weller also managed things of singular beauty where one might have thought the possibilities fairly limited] [and he did much the same in the Rimsky-Korsakov] [Without quite apologising for these pieces he kept them well under control, enough to remind one that <i>Sheherezade</i> is some kind of a symphony] [so that it sounds equally apt on every instrument in the book] [With so much scrutiny of the orchestration here it was a pity the woodwind could not always keep exact time, but in <i>Sheherezade</i> the entire orchestra was as one in following the precision of Mr Weller's beat and filling out the details of an interpretation that was as much edgy and severe as sumptuous]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[We certainly needed the lesson of Liszt's second piano concerto, played between these monsters, that the beautiful must invariably come with its own embarrassment of banality] [The grand charges up and down the keyboard] [The march of the Finale was cleaned of its strut] [producing marvels of starsounds in the upper register, shimmering effects of pedal resonance, and bursts of speed when his fingers danced over the keys in a haze] [as when he had a slow waltz echoing through deserted ballrooms at the start of the work] [and that <i>Till</i> is a tumbling inventory of ways to vary a scene] [the exotic became barbarous and bizarre: a pungent banquet, for once, instead of uninterrupted Turkish delight]
Other content	N/a

4.2 Results

This section summarises the main observations of the content analysis exercise in relation to each of the seven analysis categories (Table 3), the findings within each are presented in four subsections according to genre group. Each quoted term or phrase is followed by a reference to the appropriate table number within Appendix U so, for example, '(T1)' denotes Appendix U, Table 1 and so on.

4.2.1 Technical and musicological terminology

As the journalist interviews (see Chapter 5) suggested a decrease in the use of technical and musicological terminology during the period 1981 to 1991, a means of identifying trends or patterns in the use of highly specialised terminology over the period was required. As such, two tables were constructed into which all of the musical terminology from the analysis tables was categorised according to the following criteria:

- a) Musical terminology in common circulation likely to be understood by a lay person, e.g. terms whose meaning might be deciphered by cross reference to its other common uses, e.g. embellishment, decoration (Appendix W).
- b) Musical terminology more likely to only to be fully understood by a reader with some specialist knowledge of music performance, composition or music history, e.g. coda, fortissimo (Appendix X).

Whilst this process was necessarily subjective, it enabled the timely creation of a summary of musicological terms used. The main focus of the analysis in this section is concerned with the occurrence and nature of the terms found in category b) namely high level, specialised musical terminology.

4.2.1.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

The articles analysed in this genre group contained by far the highest occurrence of specialised technical and musicological terminology, although no discernable increase or decrease by year group or publication title was observed. Typically, articles contained references to less commonly known instruments or groups of instruments, e.g. contra bassoon (T2), basset horn (T2), soprano saxophone (T3), tam-tam (T8), harpsichord (T10) and upper strings (T4), whilst several specialist terms which described or implied types of musical composition were also noted, e.g. a capella chorus (T3), concertante (T4), symphonic meditation (T8), symphonic form (T14), oratorio (T13), chamber group (T14), sextet (T14), as were references to performance directions, e.g. pianissimos (T2), coda/s (T5, T2, T11), cadenza (T10, T11), tutti (T13). Terminology relating to the process of composition, including references to the score and its component parts, were abundant, e.g. pivot notes (T4), bar (T5), inner parts (T7), counterpoint (T12), note values (T9), dissonance (T13), polyphonic (T13), A major (T8), 6/8 (T6) and motif (T11). In describing the sound of the music itself several authors adopted more specialised terminology, e.g. timbre/s (T3), sonorities (T4), harmonic resonances (T8), tonality (T8), pitches (T9), intonation (T12) and similarly formal terminology was used to describe the

range and sounds of the instruments heard, e.g. upper register (T1), pedal resonance (T1), contralto (T6) and treble (T12). Several terms denoting tempo were included, including Italian tempo designations, e.g. andante (T6), allegro (T6), legato (T7), adagio (T5) and andantino (T10).

4.2.1.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

Whilst these articles contained fewer technical or musicological terms than those from the classical genre they contained perhaps the greatest occurrence of lay musical terminology (as per category a) above) throughout the period under review. Of the relatively scant occurrences of specialised or technical musical language, most of which occurred in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* and more frequently in the 1981 sample group than the 1987 or 1991 sample groups, several referred to the sound of the music or the way in which it was played or sung, e.g. staccato (T17), slur (T17), vibrato (T20), falsetto (T26), sotto (T26), octaves (T24), whilst a few related to the structure of the music and characteristics of its composition, e.g. 7/4 tempo (T15), chording (T15), four-square (T23). The remainder of the more specialised terminology related to specific instruments or performance equipment, interestingly including the manufacturer's names on two occasions (Hammond Organ (T15), Marshall speaker (T22), double bass-drum (T22)).

4.2.1.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

Several of the high level terms used in the jazz articles related to less commonly familiar instruments or groups of instruments, at times being highly specific even within a single instrument family, e.g. tenor saxophonist (T27), alto saxophonist (T27), baritone saxophonist (T27), soprano saxophone (T34), bass trombonist (T27), flugelhorn (T33) and rhythm sections (T32), and the range of sounds they generated, e.g. upper register (T32), tenor (T28, T30, T32). Some references were also made to performance conventions, e.g. cross-sticking (T27), tom-tom rudiments (T27), four-in-a-bar with brushes (T31). Unlike the articles analysed in the other three genre categories, the jazz articles contained three references to aspects of twentieth century music (jazz) history, namely late-bop (T30), bop player (T32), post-bebop trumpeters (T33). The remainder of the more complex terms used in the jazz articles commonly included those relating to the structure or composition of the music and/or its related performance, e.g. close-harmony riffs (T31), polyrhythmics (T30), eight bars (T27), slurred phrasing (T28), fortissimo (T30), chordal accents (T30) and semi-quavers (T33). No particular trends or chronological decrease in the types or frequency of specialised terminology were noted across the three sample years.

4.2.1.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

The articles analysed in this genre category contained fewer instances of technical or musicological terminology than in any of the former three, and again no significant quantitative decrease in the use of technical or musicological terminology was observed over the period. The more advanced musical terminology on the whole referred to non-western musical instruments or voices, e.g. kora (T38), ngoni (T38) and zither (T36), with one reference to a component part of a musical instrument, namely

the bridge (T36) and one reference to the pentatonic musical scale (T36). The remaining three terms all described the sound of the music itself (ballads (T35), timbres (T36) and vibrato (T36).

4.2.2 Background information

4.2.2.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

This genre group of samples revealed significant chronological changes in the inclusion of background information; the articles from 1981 contained relatively little background information whilst the articles from 1987 and 1991 contained noticeably more information and also a greater level of detail.

In the 1981 sample group, all of the comments related very directly to the composition of the music and its performance, e.g. the fact that a piece of music had been inscribed to a deceased musician (T3), the difficulties in choosing instrumentation for the bass line of a particular piece (T2), a composer's pace of working and similar style of technical development to another composer (T4), and the strong association of a particular piece to a certain group of performers (T4). The same could be said of the articles within the 1987 sample group, which contained for example details relating to the repertoire of the performer in question (T2), the date of composition (T8), the age of a composer (T4) and the instrumentation and key for a given piece (T8). Additional 'trivia' details were also observed, e.g. that a particular poem had inspired many other composers (T6), the title and date of a composers' first published orchestral piece (T8), the fact that a piece of music had been performed as an Act of State (T9), and that a forte piano used in a particular performance was modelled on Mozart's original instrument preserved in Salzburg (T7).

However, within the 1987 sample group it was also possible to observe a greater depth of background information, so for example details were provided concerning the trials of a particular composer's life (T6), the nature of particular composers' styles during their careers (T8, T9) and in one article it was pointed out that the music was atypical of a composer's normal style (T9). Some of the background information extended beyond the immediate concerns of the performance being reviewed, such as to include comments on Victorian musical taste in England (T6), details of the basic ingredients (T8) of a particular composer's style and inclusion composer's connection with a particular aspect of the classical genre history (T9).

Similarly, the 1991 samples appeared to contain a greater level of informative background detail than seen in the 1981 group. Again, in addition to providing basic information about the composers and the performance (although noticeably less so than in the earlier two year groups) there were several instances where information stretched beyond the immediate concerns of the performance, e.g. a detailed explanation of the title or 'plot' of a work (T13, T14), an outline of the reception of Bach's *St John Passion* in comparison to its larger counterpart the *St Matthew Passion* (T12), comments on Gallic and Parisian musical taste and the way in which a composer was required to adopt his style to suit (T10), stylistic features which were the expectation for the genre (T10) and, in the same article, a

quotation from Mozart (T10). In addition, some articles contained background information which related to the influences upon a particular composer's creative output or career (T10, T13) and the way in which a composer's work was initially and latterly received by various audiences (T10, T12). Of all the samples within this genre group, those taken from *The Times*, from 1981 and 1987, contained the least background detail.

4.2.2.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

The articles in this genre category did not suggest any obvious chronological change in the extent of background information provided. As with the classical music articles, the authors in this genre group provided many basic background details mostly concerning the performers, for example their age (T17, T22), correct name (T15, T18, T19), home region (T21), the period in which the musicians had enjoyed previous success (T15, T17, T19, T20, T24), association with other musicians (T17, T20, T22) and the musicians' style of music (T20, T22). In some instances additional background information was integrated with the author's personal views on the music or musician (T16, T22), whilst in others, the musician's place or overall status within their particular sub-genres was cited (T17, T19, T20). Interestingly, several articles in this genre group alluded to the overall commercial successes of the musicians, including the titles of albums and singles or reference to their chart success or current tour (T16, T18, T19, T20, T22, T24).

4.2.2.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

Again, some basic factual and 'trivia' information appeared, including the musicians' age (T34), home region (T32), the year in which a performer won an Oscar (T29) and the name of a soundtrack on which a piece appeared (T34). However, despite comprising a small sample group, relatively few examples of such information appeared compared to the above two genre groups. Instead, much of the background information in this group concerned musician's membership of other bands, experience of playing alongside other popular musicians during their career and, particularly in the case of long-standing jazz performers, often a description of the musician's professional career history (T30, T32, T33, T34). Similarly, many references concerned the evolution of the performer's personal style, particularly with reference to their forebears, e.g. in the incantatory Coltrane mould (T30), a musician of the school of Ellington (T31). There were also some descriptions of the artists' status within the genre or their particular sub-genre, e.g. a key member of a generation (T32), an eminent trumpeter from the surviving post-bebop trumpeters from the sixties (T33). Many of the authors in this genre group referred to the history and nature of particular trends or styles within jazz history, e.g. big band jazz (T27), swing bands (T28), late-bop (T30), post-bebop (T33), assuming perhaps a certain degree of prior knowledge from their readers. However, one author, in a 1987 article, did provide his readers with a basic definition of the components of a standard jazz orchestra (T31). As found in the rock and pop samples, several references were also made to the commercial success of the musicians, whether through reference to particular compositions or albums, their chart success or current tour (T27, T32, T33, T34).

4.2.2.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

Again, compared to the classical and rock and pop samples, this genre group contained relatively little factual information about the musicians or the music itself, with 'trivia' appearing in only one article to explain that one piece of music had featured in a recent advertising campaign (T37), whilst the same article also provided background detail concerning the performer's past links with another band and their route to commercial success. In articles concerning world music, the background information largely concerned the description of non-western musical instruments and the sounds they made (T36), the nature of the songs sung and the appearance of the performers (T38). One article described how a particular singer was held in high regard by Malian praise singers and detailed the lifestyle of an African 'griot' (T38), and the article concerning country music referred to the artist's regions of residence (T35). Two of the articles compared the artist in question to other musicians with similar repertoires, or at least from the same sub-genre (T35, T37), and only one article contained background information about a musician's former chart success with various named recordings (T37). No chronological trends emerged in this genre group, possibly due to the limited availability of articles.

4.2.3 Music referencing

Section A - Internal referencing

4.2.3.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1 – 14)

Of the four genre categories, this group of articles contained by far the highest quantity of wordage devoted to the naming of composers, performers, conductors, titles of works etc pertinent to the performance under review. Unsurprisingly, all articles named the performers at the event, whether they be soloists, e.g. Janet Craxton (T2), Karita Mattila (T5) or the character roles held in the performance, e.g. Christus (T12), Knight of the Realm (T14), the abbot (T14) or groups of performers, e.g. the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (T1), the LPO (T4), Dresden Staatskapelle (T5). Unique to this genre group was the naming of the performance conductor e.g. Walter Weller (T1), Michael Gielen (T3), Sir Colin Davis (T5). The titles of the pieces of music heard at the event were also named, e.g. *Sheherezade* (T1), *K482* (T7), *Symphony No 34* (T7), as were the names of the different movements or sections of the works heard, e.g. Finale (T5), Andantino (T10); a feature again unique to this genre group. Unsurprisingly the composers of the music were also usually named, e.g. Liszt (T1), Mozart (T7), Webern (T3), and in some instances the authors also named the venue or hosts of the event, e.g. the Round House (T2), Guildhall School (T3), the Royal Festival Hall (T13) and in one instance the event sponsors were named (T2).

4.2.3.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

As with the former sample group, many of the names cited in the rock and pop category related to the performers themselves, either as individual artists or groups, main acts or support acts, e.g. the Grateful Dead (T15), Original Mirrors (T16), The Icicle Works (T18), Tom Verlaine (T19). The names of many of the pieces of music or songs performed were also provided, e.g. *Sugaree* (T15), *Horses* (T18), *Picture Book* (T20), although authors in this genre group were perhaps more selective

than their classical music counterparts in this respect. In one instance a forthcoming recording was named (T16) and in the vast majority of instances the venue was named (e.g. T16, T17, T18, T25).

4.2.3.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

The sample articles in this genre category appeared to contain fewer instances of naming than the former two categories, however this may to some extent be a reflection of the relatively small sample size. The few occurrences of naming mostly related to the performers themselves, e.g. Buddy Rich and his 15-piece orchestra (T27), Harry 'Sweets' Edison (T28), Ken Peplowski (T32), and the songs or pieces performed at the event, although again the authors were more selective than their classical counterparts in this regard; most citing of songs or pieces occurred in articles from either *The Times* or *The Sunday Times* from 1981 and 1987, e.g. *What a Fool Believes* (T27), *Syeeda's Flute Song* (T32), *God Bless the Child* (T33) although some also occurred later in *The Independent on Sunday* in 1991, e.g. *All the Things You Are* and *I Can't Get Started* (T34). In the 1987 *Observer* sample article a suite was cited (T31) whilst in another article the title of an artist's most distinguished mainstream (T27) album was named. In six of the eight samples a reference to the venue occurred (e.g. T28, T31), although no chronological or publication trends emerged in this respect.

4.2.3.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

Where naming occurred in this small sample group it followed a similar pattern to that seen in the above groups, with references made to the performers, e.g. Crystal Gayle (T35), Katsuya Yokoyama (T36), Ami Koita (T38) or the names of the pieces of music or songs heard, e.g. *Un-En* for two kotos (T36), *Lover Man* (T35), *Spanish Harlem* (T37). In the case of a review of Japanese music, the composers were named as was the individual who delivered the pre-concert talk (T36). In two of the articles, one in 1987 (T37) and one in 1991 (T38), the venue was named.

Section B - External referencing

4.2.3.5 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1-14)

Relatively few instances of naming, not-directly linked to the performance being reviewed, occurred in this genre group, and no chronological change over the three sample years was observed. Overall, external references in the classical genre category most frequently arose in *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* across the three sample years, and most often related to other composers, in the context of stylistic comparisons, performances by the same performers, or when authors commented upon the stylistic influences on the piece or contextualised the composer and/or piece of music, e.g. similar to the style of Ligeti (T4), working in a similar way to Varese (T4), reminiscent of Wagner (T8). Surprisingly, in one instance a reference to a rock and pop artist occurred where a piece of music had been inscribed to his memory (T3), and in another article the name of a poet who wrote the ode upon which a particular piece of music was based was cited (T5). There were also some references to other historical performance contexts, e.g. grand guignol (T8), Chartres Cathedral (T9), and to performances held in the presence of an eminent listener (T9) or in one case to a deceased performer previously associated with a piece (T11).

4.2.3.6 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

This genre group contained by far the greatest incidence of references to music and musicians external to the performance being reviewed. Many of the references related to other artists as a means of describing or comparing styles of music, performance techniques or artistic influences, e.g. “a slashing Bo Diddley rhythm” (T15), “a dash of Roxy” (T16), “a heavy-metal Gary Glitter” (T22), “a kind of Guns 'n' Jovi” (T23). Naming also occurred as a result of the author explaining the artist’s experience of performing with other musicians (T22) or where the author chose to contextualise a band or performer through reference to their contemporaries, e.g. “unlike the even longer-lived Rolling Stones or The Who” (T15). If the band or artist performed a cover version then the original performer/s were named (e.g. T18, T26, T19).

References to particular sub-genres within the rock or pop tradition were also included, e.g. new wave (T16), new wave (T19), soul (T20), usually as a means of categorising the music or to show an artist’s connection with the evolution of particular subgenres, e.g. “a luminary of New York’s mid-70s punk scene which also spawned Blondie, Talking Heads and the Ramones” (T19). The names of venues were only cited in two instances (T23, T25) and on one occasion an author referred to the producer of an artist’s LP (T21).

In terms of chronological change, although there was no obvious quantitative decrease in the appearance of external musical references, it might be said that most of the external references included in the 1991 samples related to musicians more likely to be ‘household’ names at that time, e.g. Gary Glitter (T22), the Beach Boys (T22), Barry White (T24), Kylie Minogue (T26), than some of those cited in the earlier sample articles from 1981, e.g. Peter, Paul and Mary (T15), Bo Diddley (T15), Count Basie (T17), Paul Gonsalves (T17), and 1987, e.g. Scott Walker (T18), Keith Moon (T18), Jerry Garcia (T19), Allman Brothers (T21).

4.2.3.7 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

As in the former genre groups, external naming often related to the sound of the music heard or artists whose music had influenced the performer in question, e.g. “works in the McCoy Tyner mould” (T30), “a musician of the school of Ellington” (T31). Similarly, external references arose where the author likened a piece of music to another, e.g. “the jazz equivalent of Pachelbel’s Canon” (T34). Some occurrences of naming arose to link musicians to their contemporaries and peers, e.g. “Along with the saxophonist Scott Hamilton and guitarist Howard Alden (T32), “contemporaries like Wayne Shorter or Herbie Hancock” (T33), while other naming instances referred to the names of musicians whom artists had previously performed alongside, e.g. the John Coltrane band (T30), Sonny Stitt (T32), Leon Redbone (T32) and Art Blakey (T33). Almost unique to this genre group were several incidents of naming whereby the authors described performers paying tribute to other musicians, e.g. “paid honest tribute to Count Basie and, by implication, Lester Young” (T27), “played The Saints as part of a tribute to Louis Armstrong” (T33).

Where the performance included a cover version then the original performers of the music were named, e.g. Doobie Brothers (T27), Paul McCartney (T27), Ike Quebec (T32), as were the musicians responsible for a particular arrangement played, namely Earth, Wind and Fire (T27). Other performance contexts for the material heard were also cited, e.g. *West Side Story* (T29), on the soundtrack of *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (T34), and on one occasion the name of an album previously released by the artist was mentioned along with its contents (T32).

4.2.3.8 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

With some similarities to the content of the rock, pop and jazz samples, the external references in this small genre group included names of other musicians as authors described the music heard at the event, e.g. “sounded like the musicians on the old Percy Sledge records” (T35), including a reference to classical music as a means of describing the unfamiliar sounds and structures of Japanese music, “reminiscent of the main theme of Ravel’s *Rapsodie Espagnole*” (T36). Again, the names of contemporaries from the same genre as the performer in question were cited, e.g. Kenny Rogers (T35), and on one occasion a comparison was made to the success of an artist’s peer, “just as Percy Sledge’s soul classic from ’66, *When A Man Loves A Woman*, is at No. 2” (T35). Again, in the case of a cover version, the original performer was named (T35), and artists’ former membership of groups and hits with other bands also generated instances of naming, e.g. the Five Crowns (T37), The Drifters (T37), *Save The Last Dance For Me* (T37), as did the mention of an artist’s previous association with a song writing team (T37). In one article where a number of guest singers joined the main performer, the guest artists’ associations with other bands were also named (T37).

Interestingly, in one instance two particular venues were named in order to describe the style of a particular performer, “a style closer to Caesar’s Palace than to the Grand Ol’ Opry” (T35), requiring some prior knowledge on the part of the reader in order to understand the implications of this, and in the same sample article a film soundtrack, *Saturday Night Fever*, was named as the author made his point about shifting commercial radio trends (T35).

4.2.4 Reference to the audience

4.2.4.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

Very few articles in this genre group referred to the audience. Of those that did, most simply implied a gracious and appreciative audience, e.g. offering “thunderous applause with endearing diffidence” (T9), “wasn’t slow to show its appreciation” (T11), “the chorales drew the audience into a shared act with sure effect” (T12), and only one article implied that the event was well attended, referring to “the large audience” (T11). None of the articles alluded to the social composition of the audience, or the audience’s behaviours during the performance.

4.2.4.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

The sample articles in this genre group contained by far the most references to the audiences present at the events reviewed than in any other genre category. Several phrases related to the social makeup

and appearance of the audience, e.g. “principally male and given to beards, advanced spectacles and modest corporations” (T21), “across the sea of thinning hair” (T21), “the vast majority of whom were female” (T26), “spruce white audience” (T20), “the men behind” (T21), “wearing M&S cords” (T25). Other phrases depicted the audience’s behaviours, emotions or reactions to the event, e.g. “The audience’s pronounced good nature” (T15), “suicidal moshers plunging off the edge of the stage” (T23), “the crowd was spluttering with adrenalin” (T23), “clamouring fans” (T20), “They simply loved it” (T20), “staggered out in an electrified daze” (T19), “up on the stage to dance” (T24), “the whoops grew louder” (T21), while one critic quoted comments made by an audience member: “Nobody actually fancies Freddie Jackson, we just like his voice”(T24).

Some of the authors also included their personal assumptions or ponderings about their fellow audience members, e.g. “practised its whoops and hollers learned from live Allman brothers LP’s all those years ago” (T21), “Were these yuppies I wondered?” (T21), “Addiction fans are liable to namedrop such illustrious forebears as Zeppelin or The Clash when seeking to describe them” (T23), “And if he goes back to the Albert Hall in 2011, no doubt the same crowd will be there too, playing air guitar on their walking-frames” (T25).

4.2.4.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

Only three of the jazz articles, all from the 1981 sample group, contained any reference to the audiences present at the events being reviewed (T27, T28, T29). In each instance the author acted as a barometer for the audiences needs, preferences and emotional states, e.g. “when the audience longed for her to sing and dance” (T29), “a manoeuvre that reduced the punters to complete and unaccustomed silence” (T28), ““Leave them alone”, shouted a compassionate ringsider” (T27). Interestingly the use of the slang term ‘punter’ in one article (T28) perhaps implied a predominantly male audience.²⁷³

4.2.4.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

The single reference to the audience in this sample group described the venue as “packed-out” (T38) and that the audience comprised of “African members” (T38) who were sufficiently impressed with the performer to initiate “applauding even in the middle of songs” (T38).

²⁷³ Arguably, the term more strongly alludes to the male gender through the normative associations of its definition, which includes “a person who gambles...a prostitute’s client...a player who punts a ball...a person who uses a punt in boating”, as in Allen, Robert: *The Penguin Dictionary*, p. 1131.

4.2.5 Critic's view – objective observations, simple subjective descriptions, value judgements or evaluative statements.

4.2.5.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

All of the articles contained some form of objective observation or simple description, many of which contextualised the performance in terms of time and place and outlined the programme, e.g. “concert on Tuesday at St John's, Smith Square... It was a straightforward Mozart programme: the Symphony No 34, framed by two piano concertos, K482 and K488, in which Gardiner's current recording partner Malcolm Bilson was the soloist” (T7). On occasions the authors referred to the venue in which the event took place, sometimes commenting upon its suitability or particular features of the setting, e.g. “This work benefits from being heard at close quarters in the Round House” (T2), “In the presence of the master himself and with a huge tricolour appropriately draped over the balcony of the Duke's Hall” (T9), “in the college's big white concert hall” (T13).

Many comments also related to the musical and professional qualities of the performers, e.g. “he showed the sensitivity of a chamber musician, though indeed there was a pleasant lack of egoism throughout his performance, a disinclination to accept the obvious role of piano chauvinist” (T1), “Four soloists who took more than usual care over blend and tuning” (T5), and often the authors commented upon the way in which the conductor interpreted and led the music, e.g. “he kept them well under control” (T1) and “he allowed the players a good deal of latitude” (T2).

Many authors commented upon the compositions themselves, e.g. “Stylistically the work is, at one extreme, impressively hard-hitting (lots of drums and dissonance), and affectingly quiet and plangent at the other (the unaccompanied choral writing at the start), with nothing perhaps of solid memorability in between” (T13) and “But it keeps faith with the instrumental colouring that haunts Davies's work of that period” (T14). Several articles referred to the structure of the music heard, and any particularly noteworthy features, e.g. ““The new coda does, however, allow us time to get breath and feel regret” (T2), “the new piece has a big concertante element; it uses cello and bass tone (without upper strings) as a sort of bonding agent for a large, volatile wind and percussion band, and the spatial tension and movement this gives is a crucial part of the whole design” (T4), and similarly many authors observed how the different instrumental parts related to each other, e.g. “the interplay between the choral and orchestral groupings is complex but also exciting and exquisite” (T3). Unsurprisingly, significant wordage was devoted to describing the sound of the music heard, e.g. “a horror of a score compounded of chaotic fragments” (T3), “The music still divides and multiplies, rushing headlong from its unison opening on its exhilarating career” (T2), “His Adagio was, not surprisingly, a true Mozartian Andante, a lightly suspended song of a movement, each voice reticent in the low, even, dynamic level of its entry” (T10).

All of the articles also contained at least one value judgement and/ or evaluative statement. As above, these related to many different aspects of the performance, such as the quality of the performers, e.g. “Marvellous oboe solos from Janet Craxton, with the most gentle yet clear pianissimos” (T2), “The

delectable operatic trio in the slow movement for oboe, clarinet and basset horn was also bewitchingly played”(T2), “a fine quartet” (T6), “It received a spirited, sensitive performance” (T8), “gave it, almost mischievously, the sharp edge of their tongue, each cadenza dispatched with fiery brilliance” (T10). Many judgements also related to the composition or scoring, e.g. “a masterpiece of delicacy” (T1), “A modest but magical British masterpiece” (T3), “The piece has the early bloom of self-discovery” (T8).

Several evaluative statements appeared to sum up the overall quality of a piece or performance, usually in a positive sense e.g. “an assured, sharp-edged performance” (T2), “a performance that had real impact” (T4), “This glorious performance of Beethoven’s ninth symphony – bereft of exaggeration or extravagance, exuding warmth and sanity from every bar – must rank among the finest concerts Sir Colin Davis has conducted in London...It also emphasized the continuing excellence of the venerable Dresden Staatskapelle... his rapport with the orchestra was outstanding” (T5). However, occasionally more negative evaluations appeared, e.g. “it was a pity the woodwind could not always keep exact time” (T1), “a godsend maybe to Hammer Films of worse, but certainly not to the concert repertoire, not even Radio 3” (T3).

4.2.5.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

All of these samples contained objective observations or simple descriptions relating to the performance under review, although perhaps to a somewhat lesser degree than in the above genre group. Very little text was specifically devoted to naming the venue or providing the timing of the event, however a significant amount of wordage was devoted to describing the different qualities of the performers. For example, such descriptions often related to their musicianship, e.g. “kept slightly in front of the beat” (T18), “Beck largely resisted the urge to blow everyone else off stage” (T17), “It was only when the first slow song was played that David Hidalgo...showed a curious vulnerability as he sang” (T21). Often the authors commented upon the interplay between the musicians e.g. “each musician’s inventions sparking off responses from the others” (T17), “bringing Tony Bowers’ restless bass into close communication with Chris Joyce’s economical drumming” (T20).

A notable number of articles contained references to the performer’s behaviours at the event, e.g. “Out of breath, off-balance and waving to his fans” (T22), “Throughout the performance Roth conducted affairs like a circus ringmaster”(T22), “He is not the world’s best dancer either, shifting slightly leaden-footed from side to side, he periodically launches himself across the stage doing his unique variation of the Roach” (T26). Also noteworthy was the authors’ tendency to devote considerable wordage to describing performers’ personal appearances, e.g. “distractingly sexy” (T20), “a stocky, close-cropped runt of a man dressed tonight like a stevedore from New York’s East River” (T23), “Clad in a fascinating suit – white and sparkly with a curious plastic sheen” (T24), “Jimmy himself is no oil painting: short, with reddish, cropped hair and a squashed-up face, his garish red, white and blue tracksuit bottoms and black cap-sleeved T-shirt only accentuate a tendency to gawkiness” (T26).

As might be expected, the style or type of music played was described in most articles, e.g. “with a selection of songs recalling the early days of country rock”(T15), “The sound effects (of) Arctic gales and a funeral bell which welcome Tom Verlaine and his band onstage...He sings mostly of fragmented personality, eavesdropped conversation and opaque sub-poetry” (T19), “whacked out a string of rockabilly rompers and hillbilly boogie” (T23), “Starsky and Hutch guitar sound, high-energy keyboards, the old reggae bass-line” (T26), “breaking up the quivering vibrato of his distinctive high tenor vocals with a variety of kittenish yelps and squeals” (T20).

On occasions some authors detailed features of the venue, e.g. “Above the stage...hung a banner reading, in part, Eral wild carnivo and depicting a wolf couchant” (T21), “Overshadowed by a ludicrous five-high wall of Marshall speaker cabinets stretching the width of the stage” (T22), “There might I suppose be some irony in the stage backdrop for Mr Somerville's 'Dance and Desire' tour - a large face emerging from between two well-muscled, male half-torsos” (T26).

All of the articles, with only one exception, contained at least one value judgement or evaluative statement; far more than found in the classical music samples. Like the classical music samples however, these often related to different aspects of the performance itself, including the musicianship of the performers, e.g. “with scrupulous exactness...awash with ideas and enthusiasm” (T15), “the trio produced a remarkably full, meshed sound that perfectly complimented the clipped verses and magnificent choruses of their tightly-scripted material” (T18). Such evaluations sometimes referred to the interplay between musicians, e.g. “capably anchored by their two drummers” (T15), or used comparisons with other musicians as a means of passing judgement, e.g. “turning into a heavy-metal Gary Glitter” (T22), “they walk the line between chaos and K-Mart” (T23).

Most authors provided positive overall evaluations, e.g. “an untypically flashy but highly effective ending” (T15), “It was sheer magic, a test-piece by a master” (T17), “the single most sophisticated piece of music to come out of punk” (T19), although some negative judgements also appeared e.g. “Such excursions threw the preceding set into less flattering relief” (T18), “could not quite bring off a heart rending result on older, moodier material” (T20), “the songs started to blur together” (T21), “tacky beyond belief ... turning the makings of good rock ‘n’ roll into a sleazy burlesque” (T22), “much energy but no finesse... the material was pretty feeble too” (T23).

4.2.5.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

As seen in the above genre categories, all of the jazz sample articles contained objective observations or simple descriptions of what was seen or heard at the performance. In addition to text providing basic information about the performance, typically the venue, performers' names, the programme etc, a significant amount of wordage was, as in the above genre group, devoted to describing the different qualities of the performers, including their musicianship, e.g. “Early on in the set, the injection of energy provided by the band's pianist was unmistakable” (T30), “he enlivened Thermo by blasting the air with background riffs and then brought all his skills to bear on the closing blues” (T33), and the

interplay between musicians, e.g. “were hardly given time to clear their throats before being engulfed by the ensemble” (T27), “he was certainly in capable hands with the Colin Purbrook Trio” (T32), “He seemed at odds with the relentless attack of Hayes” (T33). As noted in the rock and pop sample, many articles included descriptions of the performers themselves, particularly their appearance and behaviours, e.g. “a small but ferocious figure” (T27), “Zee, a group of three young women” (T27), “he berated the bass trombonist and the baritone saxophonist” (T27), “She talked and talked in that squelchy confessional style of American chat-shows” (T29).

Most authors described the nature or sound of the music, e.g. “After clearing his lungs with a flurry of up-tempo Ike Quebec, he allowed the pace to drop on “Careless Love”” (T32), “He began with Just One of Those Things taken at a speed so fast that simply to keep semi-quavers flying along with the beat represented a triumph...He then switched to flugelhorn and, for a change, interpreted God Bless The Child at a pace so funereal each chorus took more than three minutes to complete” (T33), “Edison plays Mean To Me with the mute on, gradually dropping the volume until he’s soloing over the bass alone...Davis was more subdued, but the attractively slurred phrasing, thumping chorus playing and skidding runs that are his trade mark still jostled through the proceedings” (T28).

Many of the value judgements in this genre group again related to the musicianship of the performers, e.g. “this band is perfectly suited to making this kind of music buzz and hop” (T28), “Alternately lush and feathery, the tone is impeccable” (T32), “a feast of trumpet virtuosity ... the high note flourishes were majestic” (T33). Several authors offered their opinion as to the musicians’ status and importance, e.g. “Technically speaking, Rich is certainly one of the world’s greatest drummers” (T27), “The best of them, the fine trumpeter, Waymon Reed” (T27), “remains at the top of his class” (T33). Again, several negative evaluations were included, e.g. “What he lacks is any degree of emotional warmth” (T27), “If only she’d let the music speak more expansively for her” (T29), “rather static versions of Coltraneish sound effects” (T30), “Listeners raised on Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster will probably find it too urbane” (T32).

4.2.5.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

As in the former three genre categories, the authors provided objective observations on the musical abilities, behaviours and appearance of the performers, e.g. “She can still produce the old glottal catch and the twanging accent to order” (T35), “crouched among her gongs or raced round a circle of assorted percussion instruments” (T36), “She came on with the dignity and self-assurance of a great opera star, but proceeded to sing with the emotion of a great blues artist” (T38). Again, the authors reported on the programme of music heard and also the sound of the music itself, e.g. “she was backed by two traditional stringed instruments, the tinkling, lute-like kora and the ngoni, which looks like a miniature home-made guitar but clonked out bass lines and rhythm patterns” (T38).

However, even taking into consideration the small sample size, relatively few value judgements or evaluative statements existed in this genre group. Those present concerned either the performer’s

musicianship or their choice of programme, e.g. “the blues-slanted songs were the most convincing ... This probably had something to do with the proclivities of her excellent band” (T35), “At times they sounded like the musicians on the old Percy Sledge records, which is praise enough” (T35), “such precisely planned music, so full of interesting new sounds and played with so much virtuosity made a delightful impression” (T36). Only one negative evaluation occurred, namely “this was still an uneven set” (T37).

4.2.6 Critic’s view – subjective comments or embellished, author led commentary

4.2.6.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

Many of the articles in this genre group contained evidence of the author’s expert use of critical and creative language. For instance, several authors applied metaphor as a means of describing or evaluating the music heard, e.g. “marvels of starsounds in the upper register, shimmering effects of pedal resonance ... his fingers danced over the keys in a haze” (T1), “a pungent banquet, for once, instead of uninterrupted Turkish delight” (T1), “like a scrub with a scratchy loofah that one can hardly have too much of” (T2), “authentic instrument performances are like having your ears syringed – unfamiliar sounds become brighter and communicate more precisely, familiar sounds acquire new colours as their constituent elements are thrown up into relief and become identifiable for what they are” (T7).

In addition, the authors of three 1987 articles incorporated rhetorical questions, curiously always occupying the final sentence of the article: “What must it have been like, one wonders, when Dvorak himself conducted the Sabat Mater at the Royal Albert Hall with 700 singers in the choir?” (T6), “Was Karajan in all his glory ever so enticingly Mozartian as this? I doubt it” (T7), “Yet am I alone in experiencing a degree of impatience with all those declamatory gongs and pregnant silences?” (T9).

Some articles contained reference to the author directly, often in the first person, e.g. “London Underground made it possible for me to miss the first few minutes...while British Rail encouraged me to give up my plan to reach the Royal Festival Hall...and return home in time for the live relay on Radio 3” (T13), “I felt myself to be in the presence of history as not since Stravinsky’s last visit to London more than 20 years ago” (T9), “which challenged my assumption that one ball in the air is much like any other” (T14).

In other articles authors adopted a more erudite style of commentary, presumably to display their genre expertise, e.g. “In orchestral terms, it means taking apart the cohesive blend, the aural blur which is the feature of a modern symphony ensemble, and substituting for its rounded textures a collection of more hard-edged, individually assertive ones; so the instrumental balance reads quite differently and inner parts become exposed; thus a period performance can be cleansing and cathartic or an exercise in shock absorption” (T7), or as a means of making their point through a more creative use of language, e.g. “We certainly needed the lesson of Liszt’s second piano concerto, played

between these monsters, that the beautiful must invariably come with its own embarrassment of banality" (T1), "and feel regret, as we might when leaving a party of brilliant talkers" (T2).

4.2.6.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

This genre group saw perhaps the highest concentration of embellished and author-centric writing particularly, though not exclusively, in articles penned by former specialist rock and pop press writers. For example, many contained a large quantity of metaphorical passages, both to describe the music heard, e.g. "at a marijuana smoker's pace" (T15), "chattering drums" (T15), "machine-gun ornamentation" (T17), "sweet and sour tenor" (T17), "melodies soar with skyscraper elegance" (T19), "this ensemble is as drilled as Sandhurst cadets" (T19), "mellow-funk-by-numbers" (T24), and the musicians themselves, e.g. "his moon face regularly eclipsed by an avalanche of ginger curls" (T20), "like the queen of some cut-price carnival" (T22), "a voice, half choirboy, half dentist's drill" (T26). As with the classical music samples, many authors employed rhetorical passages, e.g. "How can they fail?" (T16), "Could you find it in your hearts to forgive me if I said they have plenty of bark but no bite?" (T21), "would you ever have found Clapton playing with an orchestra 20 years ago? Or found an orchestra that would play with him?" (T25).

Many articles contained examples of embellished or elaborate writing, e.g. "from soaring staccato, from beguiling slur to wistful echo" (T17), "suitably presage the studiously ascetic thinking man's rock to come" (T19), "in a whinnying reedy voice that bespeaks a constant pitch of eggheaded nervous tension" (T19). Similarly, one author creatively incorporated more every-day language e.g. "but when creating a mood designed to lend itself to a, er, romp on a bearskin rug, it's not ideal... You knew these girls' mums had nothing to worry about; he was probably going to see them safely to the bus stop...hardly a glowing reference for a prospective lurve god" (T24).

To a greater extent than seen in the classical music samples, several rock and pop music reviews included passages which were not necessarily related to the performance itself but seemed instead to exist purely as displays of the author's genre expertise, e.g. "funk is all about precision and timing" (T20), "for the bootleg Los Lobos cassette that will surely be on sale in Camden Market this weekend" (T21), "It is getting harder all the time²⁷⁴ to become a rock star, but still there is no shortage of applicants for the job" (T18), "the sort of Californian noise that, sanitised and deodorised, slips with hateful regularity into our charts" (T21), "Warner Bros' conviction that they've signed a world beater – a kind of Guns and Jovi" (T23).

Again, seemingly to a slightly greater extent than in the classical music samples, this group contained several autobiographical and self-referent statements, e.g. "is one of the few records from 1975 I can still listen to without embarrassment" (T21), "In a week when I had been asked, in apparent seriousness, for Diana Ross's phone number and sent four promotional packs of condoms, I was ready

²⁷⁴ Perhaps itself a deliberate 'expert' reference to the opening line of the Beatles hit song title '*Getting Better*' (1967).

for anything” (T21), “one began to wonder if a trip to the psychotherapist on the way home mightn’t be a sound idea” (T23), “Sitting at a Clapton concert sets off such musings among those of us who wish we were as young as Clapton still looks” (T25).

4.2.6.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

In line with the findings of the previous two genre categories, some jazz authors also included metaphorical writing, e.g. “whipping his cowed musicians through a series of exhausting callisthenics” (T27), “lifted, soothed and shepherded the front men” (T28), “letting the melody disappear into puffs of air” (T28), “punch a piledriver of steely warbles and explosive runs through the general furious melee” (T30), “swaying and writhing at the keyboard like a marionette” (T30), and rhetorical questions, e.g. “Why does jazz sound so much better in a club than anywhere else? ... When, for instance, did we last hear a five-piece saxophone section playing close-harmony riffs? When did a modern jazz composer last call upon a drummer to play four-in-a-bar with brushes? And when did you last hear the limpid tones of the clarinet in any contemporary jazz context at all?” (T31), along with embellished ‘day-to-day’ language, e.g. “that winking, chuckling, corner-of-the-mouth jazz” (T28), “this was the sort of thing to make you chuckle, stamp your feet and make you yell encouragement at moments of inspiration” (T31). Only Dave Gelly included any self-referential writing: e.g. “I couldn’t help reflecting on certain earlier compositions of his” (T31).

Many articles highlighted the genre expertise of their authors, e.g. “British cabaret has no equivalent of this exhilarating explosion of Broadway expertise” (T29), “Though the publicists would have us believe otherwise, jazz is running short of genuinely towering musicians, the kind of charismatic artists who can be identified in just a handful of notes” (T32), “The instrument is normally considered bland in comparison to the saxophone” (T32). Two authors passed comment on the changing quality of jazz musicianship over time: “The days when band leaders could, like Ellington, engage great musicians as full-time employees are gone” (T31), “Too many great players have died, not enough new ones have come along to take their place. One bright sign is the influx of soloists who are committed to reinterpreting the heritage of the Thirties and Forties. They may not be taking giant strides into the future, their dress sense may not raise temperatures among readers of *GQ* or *The Face*, but they are making exceptionally graceful and accessible music” (T32).

4.2.6.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

In this small sample group only one instance of first person narrative occurred: “I still felt like a day tripper in a very strange land” (T36), and only one article contained comments which might be considered examples of the author dispensing specialised knowledge, e.g. “Pop stars in the West may have to battle with record companies and managers for their money...A woman like this has status beyond that of a mere pop singer, and knows it...that showed how similar Malian styles are to R ‘n’ B and are therefore so accessible to Western ears” (T38). None of the samples contained examples of embellished or elaborate text, and only two articles contained non-event specific statements, which were fairly generalised, namely Richard Williams’ comments on the shifting formats of American

radio stations (T35) and Robin Denselow's suggestion that "Some people are born lucky, and the only decent responses to their luck is to join in the celebrations" (T37).

4.2.7 Other content

4.2.7.1 Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical (Appendix U, Tables 1–14)

Only two instances of material classed as 'other' occurred in this genre group, both of which occurred in *The Sunday Times*, one in 1981 and one in 1987, referring to other associated texts: "Jonathan Lloyd is interviewed on page 41" (T3), and "Felix Aprahamian's programme note" (T8).

4.2.7.2 Rock and Pop (Appendix U, Tables 15-26)

The text which was classed as 'other' in this genre group all appeared in either *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* or the *Independent on Sunday* and comprised direct quotations by musicians themselves, e.g. "We really know our stuff don't we" (T20), "I gave up drinking, smoking and screwing around; it was the worst ten minutes of my life" (T22), "To show my American record company that I haven't got an elastic band tied round my goolies" (T26) or in one instance a summary of comments made by a performer "Jimmy remarks that, no longer anybody's spring chicken, he feels a bit of a fraud" (T26).

4.2.7.3 Jazz (Appendix U, Tables 27-34)

No additional content appeared in the articles from this genre group.

4.2.7.4 Roots (Appendix U, Tables 35-38)

No additional content appeared in the articles from this genre group.

4.3 Summary and evaluation of hypotheses

The following is a summative evaluation of the content analysis findings in relation to the original research hypotheses presented in Table 3:

With regards to the incidence of specialised musical terminology, no particular trends or obvious chronological decrease in the use of such language was noted between 1981 and 1991, or within specific genre groups or publication titles, and as such the original hypothesis was not supported. Instead, the analysis revealed that the classical, early, contemporary and contemporary classical music (referred to hereafter in this chapter simply as 'classical') articles consistently contained by far the highest occurrence of specialised musical language, whilst those in the rock and pop sample group displayed the highest incidence of lay-musical terminology across the three sample year groups.

The supposition that by 1991 some increase in the incidence of background information would be observed across all genres was indeed proven to be true, most notably within the classical genre group. Within this sample of texts, it was possible to observe not only a chronological expansion in the amount of background information provided but also an increase in the breadth and depth of

information offered, alongside a decrease in the presentation of more 'basic' factual information; in the 1991 sample group much fuller explanations were being offered, greater historical detail was included and, in general, references were being made to information which extended far beyond the immediate concerns of the performer and performance being reviewed. Also noteworthy, was the tendency of rock, pop and jazz authors to refer to the commercial success of musicians within their review articles.

It was hypothesised that the authors of the classical music reviews would place the greatest emphasis upon 'naming', pertinent to the event being reviewed, by virtue of the associated performance modes. This was indeed proven to be the case and references to the names of composers, performers, conductors and titles of works abounded within this sample group. It was also anticipated that by 1991 fewer references to other music, musicians and venues, beyond those directly connected with the performance being reviewed, would be observed, however whilst such a chronological shift was not clearly borne out in this analysis, indeed relatively few instances of external naming occurred in the classical genre group across the three sample years, it was discovered that the rock and pop sample articles contained a far higher concentration of references to music, musicians and venues not directly connected to the performance being reviewed. In addition, it was noted that of those external references which did appear in the rock and pop category, those in the 1991 year group arguably related to musicians with greater household familiarity than those cited in the 1981 and 1987 samples, thus perhaps being less likely to deter the casual reader. Of the few external references in the classical genre sample group, most arose in *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* across the three sample years. In relation to the jazz and roots sample groups, no chronological changes were detected in terms of either internal or external referencing, although this may in part be due to the limited availability of samples.

With regards to references to the audience, it was hypothesised that the audience for classical music would rarely be referred to. This supposition was proven true; indeed the classical music articles contained very few acknowledgements, let alone descriptions, of the audiences at the events reviewed. On the occasions where their presence was acknowledged the lack of descriptive detail might perhaps result in the reader imagining a homogenous group of appreciative, but uninvolved, bystanders to the performance. In stark contrast, and again in support of the original hypothesis, the articles covering rock and pop events contained by far the highest incidence of references to the audience, including a broad range of descriptive detail covering social makeup, appearance, behaviours, assumed prior musical listening and assumed emotions and desires. Interestingly, in light of David Sinclair's reference (5.2.4, p. 155) to the press' emerging acknowledgement of the older rock fan, several articles indeed highlighted that the audience included older, usually male, fans.

As anticipated, all of the sample articles contained objective or anecdotal material. This typically related to the programme of music, the composers, (particularly in respect of classical music articles), the venue, the musical and professional qualities of the performers and the structure and sound of the

music. Similarly, the evaluative statements and value judgements typically related to the quality of the performance, the composition or scoring or the interplay between musicians. Interestingly, the rock, pop and, to a lesser extent, jazz music samples included several references to the performers' appearances and behaviours. With regards to the supposition that classical and jazz music critics may have offered fewer value judgements or evaluative statements than their rock and pop counterparts this appeared to be true, since the greatest frequency of such judgements and statements indeed appeared in the rock and pop samples. It was also observed that whilst authors of the classical, rock and pop samples offered both positive and negative evaluations, the jazz and roots samples contained only one negative evaluation each.

The original hypothesis that the authors of classical music reviews might have adopted a more learned writing style was indeed supported in the sense that there were many examples of phrases which were of an elaborate or convoluted nature, including metaphorical language, rhetorical questions, creative use of language and phrases which were distinctly author-centric. The writing in the rock and pop articles also displayed these features, but in keeping with the original hypothesis, the articles in this genre group seemed to exude an increased level of flamboyance and show less creative restraint than those in the classical music group, containing more frequent and pronounced uses of metaphorical passages, rhetorical questions, embellished text, creative writing (including the careful integration of more 'every-day' phrases), autobiographical and author centric passages and displays of authorial expertise in relation to both their chosen genre and issues relating to the broader music industry. Whilst the articles in the jazz category displayed many of these same characteristics, they appeared less frequently than in the rock and pop samples, and only one author included any self-referent material. Within the small sample of roots music articles, none contained any obvious examples of embellished or elaborate text, only one instance of an author applying first person narrative occurred and only one article included any detail which might have been intended as a deliberate display of expert knowledge. As such the writing in this final genre category could perhaps be considered the least flamboyant or author-centric.

With regards to 'other' content, namely that which did not fit into any of the above categories, and for which no hypothesis existed, two examples of cross-referencing to other texts occurred in *The Sunday Times*, and four quotations by musicians appeared spanning *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Independent on Sunday*, providing an interesting illustration perhaps of the house styles of those particular publications.

Chapter 5 – Interviews With Broadsheet Music Journalists

5.1 Introduction

Having considered the quantitative and qualitative results drawn from the analysis of historical newspapers, this chapter presents the key findings obtained from the second primary source, namely interviews with broadsheet music journalists. What follows herein are carefully selected verbatim quotations, taken from the interviews, which reveal the journalists' personal perspectives upon, and experiences of, broadsheet music journalism during the period 1981 to 1991. The quotations are arranged thematically, in section 5.2, as follows:

- 5.2.1 Histories, traditions and personal critical styles
- 5.2.2 Selection of coverage and editorial values
- 5.2.3 Genre prioritisation and hierarchies
- 5.2.4 Media and publishing environment changes
- 5.2.5 The consequences of the Wapping Dispute
- 5.2.6 The golden age and narratives of decline
- 5.2.7 The political climate and Thatcherism
- 5.2.8 Music advertising
- 5.2.9 Employment conditions (a) Recruitment (b) Reward (c) Training and development
(d) Employee relations

Where some or all of an interview question or interviewer comment appears in the following extracts, this is indicated in round brackets and underlined>. Similarly, where additional words have been added to enhance the flow of text these are also shown in round brackets, although such additions have been kept to a minimum to limit interviewee misrepresentation. Interview dates and venues are summarised in Appendix Y. The page location, within appendices Z – ZZ, of each quote is indicated and each interviewee is identified by initials in square brackets as below, unless the extract refers to personal employment conditions or occurred during Part B of the interview, thus requiring anonymity (as per 2.3.1 (p. 67) and 5.2.9 (p. 176)). The interview findings are then summarised in section 5.3.

[RC] = Richard Cook	pp. 355-370	[NK] = Nicholas Kenyon CBE	pp. 431-437
[CD] = Clive Davis	pp. 371-384	[FM] = Fiona Maddocks	pp. 438-446
[RD] = Robin Denselow	pp. 385-396	[BN] = Bayan Northcott	pp. 447-465
[HF] = Hilary Finch	pp. 397-407	[MO] = Meredith Oakes	pp. 466-469
[DG] = Dave Gelly	pp. 408-420	[RS] = Robert Sandall	pp. 470-480
[EG] = Edward Greenfield ²⁷⁵	pp. 421-424	[DS] = David Sinclair	pp. 481-492
[PG] = Paul Griffiths	pp. 425-430	[TS] = Tom Sutcliffe	pp. 493-511

²⁷⁵ In this instance, relevant quotations have been drawn from a recorded interview conducted by Moss in 2001, obtained from The Guardian and Observer Archive and Visitor Centre, Oral History Project, OHP/27/1.

The interview questions were divided into two sections: in the first (Part A), the interviewer sought to understand how various environmental factors had influenced participants' experiences of, and approaches to, broadsheet music criticism between 1981 and 1991, whilst in the second (Part B), the questions explored journalists' employment experiences between 1981 and 1991; the outcomes of each set of questions are presented in sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.8, and 5.2.9 a - d respectively below.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Histories, traditions and personal critical styles

Several interviewees depicted the historical context for English broadsheet music journalism prior to the 1980s:

[TS] "...in the 1950s... *The Times* refused to allow critics to review the music of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, the so-called Second Viennese School, because they were taken to be just nasty and modern and of no importance, they were writing rubbish and nonsense. So *The Times* critic Frank Howe, and in those days *Times* reviews were anonymous, simply didn't review any of that stuff. They only started to review that kind of music when William Mann became the Chief Music Critic in the 1960s. So the idea of censorship in British arts coverage has a long history, and it's self-censorship of course." (p. 496)

[DG] "*The Observer* had started covering jazz in the 1950s and popular music, not pop music, not long after that. Jazz was like the Trojan horse." (p. 410)

[DS] "I often thought that it's a curious position to occupy: being someone who writes about pop and rock for a broadsheet newspaper, ... in the 1980s it was a very odd position. There weren't many of us around... It's an odd thing to do. There's this story about Richard Williams who once filed a piece about the Sex Pistols for *The Times*... in the 1970s, and he filed a piece in which he made reference to the fact that the record was called 'Anarchy in the UK' and the sub Editor saw this and looked in the style book and saw that *The Times* style was to say United Kingdom so he changed it to Sex Pistols record 'Anarchy in the United Kingdom', and that's what you were up against, it's as uncomprehending as that. So it was a difficult subject for the broadsheets of that era to address, (they) didn't really understand the lexicon of pop music." (p. 489)

Interviewees were asked about the extent to which their personal critical styles had been influenced by the traditions and styles of former music commentators; most insisted that they had forged their own approach with little or no reference to their forebears, whilst the rock and pop critics also described their sense of breaking new ground:

[DS] “ (At) *The Times*, certainly in the 1980s ... (a)rts coverage was very much weighted in favour of opera, theatre, dance, classical music, and so to find a voice for popular music or rock music in amongst that crowd was a bit of a balancing act ... There weren't very many role models for writing about rock and pop in the broadsheet papers at that time...there was a different set of demands for the broadsheets, they weren't interested in lots of hip slang ... you had to be lot more sober, a lot more considered and you had to try and build a bridge basically between the world of pop and rock, which has it's own very tribal and idiomatic way of writing, and all the history involved with it... and something that the Arts Editor could understand... So my mission... was to make the idea of a pop concert or an interview with a pop star into something that John Higgins (the Arts Editor) could at least tolerate, or if not actually relate to, and that he felt confident would make sense to the readers.” (p. 481)

[RS] “My plan always was that everyone would understand it. I aimed for maximum intelligibility, ... the people who wrote for the weekly music press were increasingly writing in a kind of code that could only really be properly understood by people who were very close to what they were writing about... the *New Musical Express*, which had shed a huge amount of circulation in the six or seven years prior to me starting to write at the *Sunday Times*, was increasingly embattled in its attitudes, there were loads of people that it just would not, as a matter of principle, talk about in any terms at all, not even to be rude about... and I saw myself as being part of a movement to kind of readjust the sort of view finder, in a way, of the music press... I started writing (at) almost exactly the same time that *Q* magazine launched, which had a similar kind of plan, and I started writing for *Q* as a consequence. But there was a sort of redressing of a sectarian kind of impulse in the music press which again I was quite pleased to be part of because for people of my age, and I was then in my early thirties, it was rather tedious to be lectured the whole time about people that you weren't necessarily terribly interested in or likely to come across, while other people you did know something about and were vaguely curious to know what had happened to them were excluded. (p. 471)

...with *Q* you were writing to an informed audience and so you could have more fun with them and you could be a bit cheekier and spend a lot less time scene setting and things like that; more relaxed. With the *Sunday Times*... you have to sort of sit up straight in your chair and make sure that you are covering everything that you are supposed to mention. I mean I may have over exaggerated that in my own mind, perhaps another person wouldn't have found that such a burden, but I found it very burdensome. Writing articles for the *Sunday Times* for a long time it was difficult, it really was difficult. I didn't really enjoy it. I enjoyed the finished thing, when I'd done it, but I didn't enjoy doing it. Whereas *Q* was a lot more fun and the people I was writing for were my own age and more on my wave length... and *Q* had a house style which was sort of slightly larky and not rude but sort of irreverent, they liked to make jokes.” (p. 473)

[DS] “I think they (broadsheets and the music press) were slightly separate worlds, and I think that the music papers didn’t take the broadsheet journalists very seriously at all. They looked on us as, which we were, as a bunch of amateurs. We were regarded as pretty useless by the music press and I have to say that the *NME* and the music press did set the agenda to a large extent, as far as I’m concerned, in a way that now you’d think it was probably the other way around. Now, if Alex Petridis talked about the Arctic Monkeys in *The Guardian* then that’s a big thing. I mean you may or may not have heard about them through the *NME* or some other specialist channel, but he’s just as likely to have picked up on them at about the same time as the *NME* guy, if not earlier. Back then though we were very much following in their wake. But we were more open minded, in 1985 the *NME* wouldn’t even entertain the idea of reviewing Paul McCartney’s record, or Elton John’s show, and they’d just about maybe give a little bit of space to the Rolling Stones, but only to mock them. It was very, very inbred and inward looking and hipper than thou, and so we had a more open minded stance, we’d cover all of those things really, we’d do something on Cyndi Lauper and we’d also do the House of Love or somebody who was pretty obscure, you know. But we did take our cue quite a lot from them, they were the ones in the forefront and we were slightly more ‘following up’... It was a big moment actually when Kurt Cobain died, the broadsheets didn’t have a clue, it was really embarrassing. I thought it was terrible, and it was often remarked on, ...most of the Editors, Night Editors and Obituaries Editors didn’t have a clue who Kurt Cobain was and couldn’t care less, they thought he was just another pop star. We knew that it was a huge story and that it was massively significant, kids were really upset about it. It was a serious, big story. So in the 1980s it was very much the case that readers weren’t really so well informed and the Editors and people running the show certainly weren’t, so we couldn’t really compete with the *NME* or *Q* or whoever it was.” (p. 490)

One rock and pop music critic reported sensing little need to align his work to the serious critical stance of former generations, and conveyed his enjoyment of the role:

[RD] “I would never put any of mine down as great writing anyway, hopefully it’s good writing... (p. 392) Occasionally the subs ring up and say ‘we don’t understand that sentence what do you mean?’ Which I’m delighted to (explain), they’re a very civilized lot as you’d expect. I’ve been very lucky to do it for so long, it’s been very good fun.” (p. 396)

In terms of jazz criticism, two seemingly critically polarised journalists defended their views pertaining to the most appropriate approach to the genre, with one favouring a more accessible format and the other, despite being a complete musical autodidact, defending a purist and more ‘text-centred’ approach:

[CD] “Richard Cook ... has a particular vision of how people should write about jazz ... he feels that we should be paying much more attention to avant-garde experimental jazz, and my

feeling is that avant-garde music has had forty years to establish itself and it hasn't, and that probably tells you something about it, to put it in a nutshell. I tend to think, and probably like Dave Gelly as well, that there's a huge swathe of people who are desperate to hear music that's not pop music that stretches them slightly but that's melodic and reasonably accessible. I'm not saying that it has to be dumbed-down, but it has to be friendly in a way. The other school takes a view that jazz is no good unless it challenges people all the time. Well I think if you're going to do that you'll end up with a very minority art form, which is what we've got." (p. 381)

[RC] "...what really drove a lot of my writing from the beginning was that I wanted to talk about music. I wasn't particularly interested in personalities. You look at the way rock writing has gone and it's all about personality... I mean you could read a review and have no idea what the record actually sounds like... It's an old fashioned point of view, but I always think that the person reading the review wants to know what the record sounds like ... so I did adopt this old fashioned position of talking about 'what can you hear on the record?'... I think that the constituent parts of music... tend to evade being talked about these days. (pp. 356-357)

...my experience of broadsheet jazz writers has been (that) most of them are a pretty poor lot and I think [of] the people who are writing today, the only one with any quality at all is John Fordham... I mean one reason why the jazz audience is backward in this country is that it's not well looked after, the journalism that it's given is very poor in my humble opinion. There are good writers around but they're not writing for the broadsheets for the most part. (p. 362)

... I just really approached it from a certain perspective... I tried to be quite analytical and I think that ... you have to do that with jazz because there's very little image around (it), it's very much about music for music's sake, it's not so much even about music for entertainments sake." (p. 368)

Several other considerations were cited as important in determining the approach to broadsheet jazz criticism:

[BN] "Well jazz as you may know has a funny history, it has popular periods and it has kind of minority and esoteric periods which it's rather in now and has been for some time. I mean most people would regard it as niche music now and I mean compared with pop of course it is. But what one has to remember is that what passed for jazz in the earlier days, between the wars, was actually popular dance music; it wasn't real jazz so it's sort of slightly ill-defined." (p. 463)

[DG] "*The Observer* has started an interesting thing now in the last few months, since it went Berliner...which is called 'Email The Experts' and it's interesting because they (the readers)

ask basic things, and if they had emails back in the 1980s you'd have still got the same sort of letters then." (p. 417)

[CD] "When the theatre critics go to a play, they feel quite open about saying 'that was a dreadful play', jazz people just do not like doing that. They hate it because they feel it's... a much more subjective business; because in a play, say it's Shakespeare, you have the text and you know exactly what you're comparing the text to, but in jazz it's much more fluid and you don't know if that man really meant to play that flat note, so people are very wary about passing judgement (As if you're letting the side down?) Yes, you're letting the side down because it's a minority pursuit. But I think you're actually making conditions worse by being endlessly positive because if you're positive about everything then how on earth is the reader supposed to know what's good and what's bad, it's as simple as that. I think that's the problem with jazz at the moment, has been for a long time." (p. 378)

However, regardless of genre, interviewees revealed several non-musical factors which affected their personal critical styles:

[RD] "Journalism is a bit like Indian cooking. You've got to get your ingredients all ready first. So you've got to get the facts right and know what's there, you've got to get your different interviews right and your quotes right and then actually writing is quite a fast experience although the research, if you're doing a longer piece, might take you a bit longer ... it's just the nature of journalism, you have to write fairly fast otherwise you can't do it. Unlike academia really." (p. 387)

[BN] "At one stage I had a sort of game of working at least one extremely obscure item of English vocabulary into each article, but placing it in a context where it would be understandable because I thought one should try and keep neglected words in, and this was the old English student in me coming out; and so I would place a word like plangent or something like that... There is a sort of games playing side to this; you had certain things to say, a certain amount of information to get over, names of works, this sort of thing, you want to make it sort of grab the readers, perhaps make it entertaining. Maybe if you're in a good mood or it's a fun piece you play little games with the style and so on." (p. 464)

[DS] "Obviously on broadsheet newspapers it's much shorter than the lead time on the weeklies and certainly much shorter than any monthly magazine... (W)ith albums... sometimes it can be pretty short notice... It tends to be a rolling process, so you tend to be listening to material now that you might review in two or three weeks time, but often you don't get the record until maybe the day you've got to review it which is pretty hopeless... you have to pretty much come up with a snap judgement on it maybe having only heard it once or twice... Sometimes interviews can be very quick, but usually you'd expect to

have a week or ten days to turn it around. It's like having an essay deadline every day of your life basically because you have this succession of deadlines and you always start just a little bit later than you ought to do to get the work done in time... in broadsheet newspapers, and indeed daily newspapers generally, it's a much shorter turnaround. But you're also writing shorter pieces." (pp. 483–484)

[HF] "... this is the eternal question, 'who does read you?' Obviously people that have no interest in classical music at all are probably unlikely to read classical music reviews, on the other hand they might; if you're sitting on a train and you're desperate you might read everything. So I've always believed, and I think the Editors have too, that you've got to write so that it can be understood by absolutely everyone, even someone with no knowledge of classical music, while at the same time being stimulating and focussed enough for those who know quite a bit about classical music." (p. 400)

5.2.2 Selection of coverage and editorial attitudes

When the journalists were asked how music coverage was selected for inclusion they described several influencing factors, some personal and others linked to the composition of the page itself:

[DS] "I guess it's a combination of things, if it's a big enough act with a new album or a new tour then that would fit the first set of considerations, for live reviews anyway, and then how recently we'd done them before, how timely the whole thing was, how much space there was, what else was happening that week in the arts, which is still the case. You know, often I get people saying 'you must review this band because they've just got to number one' or 'they've just headed Reading festival' or something, and actually the reason you can't review them that week is because there's some new ballet, or there's some big opera or just some combination of other things, so you're working in a much bigger field than just popular music. But I suppose it's usually the more established acts that would have been considered, although that did all change quite dramatically when *The Independent* started up in 1987." (p. 482)

[RD] "I'd see who was on or people would ring me up... (Referring to personal log book) You know in June 1981, it was Springsteen, June 1st. Commander Cody, Country Band Dingwalls June 2nd, The Beat, sort of post-punk band June 3rd, Rita Coolidge June 8th ... Shakin Stevens June 11th, George Benson June 12th Pink Floyd June 13th, interview. So it's been very eclectic and it's one of the great strengths of *The Guardian*, that they took all the stuff, it's nice." (p. 388)

[BN] "I'm very interested in early music and I'm influenced by early music a lot. I started as a 20th century specialist, but my real heart is in Haydn and Schubert and so on so it's pretty

wide really. I can give Vivaldi a miss, and I'm not a great Chopin fan, you know there are deaf spots but I don't write about them." (p. 451)

[DS] "...there's a hierarchy of people you've got to appeal to or make sense to or be accountable to, and the first person is your Editor of the arts section. If your Editor doesn't think what you've written is any good then it's not going to go any further, so that's your first priority. Then beyond your Editor it's your reader, and those two are pretty much intertwined. So you've got to entertain and inform and make sense of it all to that one person and that group of people... and your critique of it, your take on it, your feeling about it, is a secondary consideration, although it's important. As for the artists, the music industry and the PR's, you have to slightly distance yourself... you certainly know if you've pissed someone off. But you know, by next week they'll be back with a different act and there'll be another day and they're not going to get upset over a long period, so you have to distance yourself from all of that... in terms of the people you are writing about, they're pretty robust generally. Sometimes it goes against you, sometimes people see your name down to interview them and they refuse to talk to you because of something you said about them before. Mark Knopfler did that to me the other day, I suppose he was reviewing his schedule in the morning and he saw my name down and said 'no', and that was because of a review I'd written about his show at the Albert Hall a year before. But it doesn't happen very often." (pp. 490-491)

However, in describing the decision making process most interviewees affirmed the supremacy of editorial opinion:

[HF] "...either the Arts Editor or the Chief Music Critic would draw up the monthly schedule and would... choose what was to be covered and chose which critic should cover what, and it's still like that even today, it's never changed. So you get a music schedule, and for each day there'll be two or three concerts which are chosen by that person and allocated. Sometimes, well you know, 'yes it's a song cycle so Hilary will do that', but (it's) by no means hard and fast. You could be asked to do something quite out of your field just because of the way the schedule goes or who's free or who's on holiday or whatever. But the critics never had any say on *The Times*, we do what we're told on *The Times*, it's not democratic." (p. 399)

[DS] "We all get a timetable of what we've got to do, this might be different elsewhere, but at *The Times* that's always pretty much how it's been done. You try to stick to that more or less." (p. 483)

[Anon. 10] "...they always told me what they wanted. That decision was always made in the centre and I think that's typical of broadsheets. They've got very little patience in this field

with people coming along and saying 'there's something really interesting I'd like to review', they just don't really have time." (pp. 548-549)

[DG] "... the people who worked on newspapers in those days in an Editorial capacity tended to be generalist, well informed people, or if they had their specific interest it was just part of what they did. When I started at *The Observer* (1974) ... There was the Arts Editor (John Lucas) and the Literary Editor, these were the two people who were in charge of that part of the paper. The Literary Editor was Terence Kilmartin, the man who translated Proust. These are not inconsiderable people, these are not hacks." (p. 409)

However, some interviewees suggested that editorial attitudes, in particular the nature of editorial opinion concerning pop and rock music coverage, began to change during or shortly after the 1980s:

[DS] "I think now everyone who's interested generally in the arts will know something about popular music, but back then they didn't. They really didn't, it was two different worlds. If you want the biggest change of all I think that was probably it. I mean, the Editor classes in the 1980s were pretty clueless about the subject and indeed in the 1990s some of them probably, at *The Times* anyway... (p. 485)

(I)n the early 1980s you could say there were two different worlds; you had the *NME* with its incredible hipster slang and in-jokes and self-regarding egotistical writing, and you had the broadsheets with their straight-laced old fashioned Anarchy in the United Kingdom, slightly out of touch approach. By the end of the 1980s I think you'll find the *NME* and *Melody Maker* really chummed up, thanks to *Q* I would say, because *Q* suggested that there were some readers out there you might want to entertain or interest, and that you might want to take account of what they're interested in and try and write in a way that has a more general broad appeal, not like your little indie ghetto crowd which is diminishing all the time, you know, their circulation really was dropping. In the broadsheets meanwhile, thanks to *The Independent* and the arrival of *Q*, the idea of writing about rock and pop suddenly became far more of a mainstream proposition and they accepted it, they had to learn.

I remember one memo that came round once, when we got the name of the drummer wrong in U2, and this memo went round, this was the end of the 1980s, saying 'this is simply not good enough, U2 are a really big band and we do not make mistakes like this', and this was the paper that a decade earlier had been insisting that the Sex Pistols record was Anarchy in the United Kingdom. So priorities had changed, and I think they woke up to the world of pop and rock and there was more of a level of convergence if you like...Pop culture bled into the mainstream and the broadsheets had to take account of that, and did take account of it. So it became much more a component of the broadsheet cultural mix than it had ever been before. It wasn't any sort of alien or something to be tolerated, it was something that had to be accommodated pretty sensibly, although there was still some way to go before the kind of general acceptance we have nowadays. You still had Bernard Levin, who was like a really

crusty commentator, he was quite famous actually, famous for his incredibly long winded approach. He once wrote a very famous piece where the whole article was one sentence and it was like a thousand words, but it was all one sentence. And that was the sort of trick he'd pull. He would always wade in. And I remember when Kurt Cobain died, they gave a *huge* prominence, I mean, I wrote quite a good piece I thought, but it was completely dwarfed by Bernard Levin saying, 'who is this heroin addict, just another tin pot pop star who thinks he's God and discovered he's not, and who cares' and it was all very dismissive and paternalistic and quite out of touch. Most people knew who he was. And so it still wasn't like it is now, but by the end of the 1980s things had certainly moved along in that direction." (pp. 491-492)

[RD] "...folk music was kind of OK but pop music was, even post Beatles and Stones it was a bit sort of 'Hmm, is that what we should be writing about?' But they changed very fast." (p. 389)

[RD] "I was probably much younger than the editors, and this is definitely no longer the case, therefore they're more likely to know now about the sort of stuff that I know about, or certainly know more about the indie stuff now....(Can you think when that might have started to shift?) Oh I should think in the late 1980s sometime probably, late 1980s, 1990s. I started when I was a student and I was (doing) kind of precocious writing about stuff they didn't know about that I felt they ought to know about, but obviously over the years you get the younger editors coming up. So the editor I'm working for now knows far more about it than any of the editors, or is far more keen on it and goes to more concerts. I meet her at more concerts than any of the other editors, who I would never expect to meet at a concert at all. But the current arts page editor, who is called Imogen Tilden, is a big fan, which is nice, it's good." (p. 388)

In contrast to the suggestion that editors became steadily more knowledgeable and appreciative of the rock and pop genre, several classical music critics suggested a gradual decline in editorial knowledge and appreciation of their genre since the 1980s:

[NK] "What I would say is that all the time that I was at *The Times* the people dealing with the page, whether the Arts Editor or the Arts Sub-Editor, knew a quite significant amount about music and so were reasonably expert in giving an opinion or saying the day after 'I thought you got that wrong' or whatever it may be, and that was true when I went to *The Observer*. But there was increasingly less knowledge among the people that were doing the editing." (pp. 432-433)

[NK] "...another big, big problem that people have today is total editorial ignorance of who's important and who isn't. So how do they chose who to interview or not? But if I suggested something to John Higgins or to John Lucas they would have a reaction, they would say 'I

don't think that's very interesting' or 'he can't talk to save his life', and sometimes they would suggest things to us." (p. 539)

[TS] "...what's in fact happened as we've got towards the year 2000 and into the present day is that the Editors don't really see any distinction between the different forms of music, so they feel they are doing a good job by covering 'music'. They feel that classical music doesn't have as large an audience, isn't as interesting to their readers, their young readers in particular, and that may or may not be true. So they feel they are still doing a perfectly good job even though the perception among classical music critics of the Critics Circle, of which I'm Chairman, is that in fact the situation is in fact a complete disaster.

So that's why I referred to this in the emails to you comparing what happens in the *Zie Deutsche Zeitung*, or *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, or any of those German newspapers with what happens here. They do have rock and pop coverage now in those German (titles) but at the same time they have five or six broadsheet pages devoted to the coverage of culture and in that context the existence of rock and pop coverage is only a small, it's a proportion, and it's a reasonable proportion, it doesn't mean that you don't get opera reviews that are 1200 words long. Whereas in this country they all sort of go into the same kind of very narrow funnel and the reviews are all so short you can't say anything, and basically the coverage of culture in this country is a form of entertainment, and therefore the idea of that coverage is not to comment on what's happening or to enlighten people about aspects of it in its historical context, it's simply to provide people with a useful consumer guide. You're setting a quite interesting period, because it was very much I think with the benefit of hindsight, looking back, it was the turning point really in the middle of the 1980s, when I gave up being Deputy Arts Editor of *The Guardian*. The new Editor at that point who was appointed was in fact the former Deputy Sports Editor and he really knew nothing about culture at all." (p. 493)

However, another journalist argued that only opera criticism could act as a form of consumer guidance:

[HF] "I think only in opera can you be considered to be a consumer guide really because that's the only thing that's going to go on for more than one performance where you can actually recommend that someone goes or doesn't go." (p. 406)

One participant described how, as a consequence of the increased editorial desire for coverage of pop music as a distinct category in itself, he sensed an increasing loss of editorial appetite for coverage of material which might otherwise have been considered 'popular', in the broader sense of the term, or which could not easily be placed into one of the standard genre category subheadings on the broadsheet arts page (see also Appendix AAA):

[DG] “Originally I started writing about popular music... When I started in the 1970s that was a very broad thing. I said ‘well can I interpret that as being anything which is popular?’ and they said, ‘yes of course you can’. Then you discover of course that things that are actually popular are things that nobody thinks about because they are there all the time... Nobody regarded it as a separate and sacrosanct thing whereby everybody had to be an expert on something...you see an interesting thing and write about it. I remember some time around then (1976) I did a thing about Lata Mangeshkar who was actually the most recorded singer in the world, because she was the voice of all Indian films... She came to do a concert in Birmingham and thousands of Indian people turned up and I thought well that’s the thing to write about, that’s ‘popular’ you know. So I did that...They were perfectly happy with that, in fact, that was the sort of thing that *The Observer* really liked at the time... (pp. 408-409) I think that was probably the first piece of world music that was ever in a broadsheet newspaper.” (p. 411)

[DG] “There were some things I still did because none of the pop people would, either it was beneath them, or they didn’t know about it. For instance I’d often do things about country music. They used to have this big thing at Wembley once a year, and I’d sometimes go and do those, for no other reason than I thought well nobody else is going to do it and also it was an interesting phenomenon... minor bits of popular music were getting completely ignored so they tried to attach themselves to jazz. So you got people who were basically show singers for instance, but they tried to pretend they were somehow sort of jazz singers so they’d get any sort of coverage at all in the newspapers... By this time everything was in categories. There was no category for them... If you start making little niches for everything, in the end something is going to be left out because it hasn’t got a niche, or people don’t think it’s important or people don’t want to know about it.” (pp. 411-412)

Another rock and pop journalist recalled how an editorial partiality for world music towards the end of the 1980s led him to expand his coverage:

[RD] “Well the last things I wrote in the 1980s were about Neil Young and David Byrne of Talking Heads. The first thing in the 1990s was Mano Negra... yes there was more world music creeping in there I think by the beginning of the 1990s. June Tabor, the folk revival started again in the 1990s to some extent. Christy Moore, 1990, Pogues 1990 played at Wembley, Baaba Maal 1990, Youssou n’ dour 1990, Africa coming in a big way... So yes, new stuff started to come in towards the end... thanks to global influences really.” (p. 394)

The interviewees affirmed the earlier findings of the existence of a typology of articles, and went on to describe changes in editorial preference for different types of article during the 1980s, for example:

[DS] Previews were a separate thing to reviews, which were a separate thing to interviews. You had previews which were part of the listings or Saturday Week Ahead section; reviews which were obviously going to a gig or a show and writing it up afterwards, a critique basically. Interviews which would incorporate previews usually, usually you'd be interviewing someone before their show came to town or before the record came out to flag it up because that's when people are available to be interviewed, they don't do it unless there's something to promote; and album reviews obviously, as and when the album comes out you review the album. So that's your four areas of activity." (p. 483)

[BN] "I think a review still has three basic functions: it acquaints you with an event that happened, I mean that is on a simple news level, this concert happened; if it's an opera or a recording or a music book, something that's around for quite a long time it tells people, you know, it's a consumer report, should they book for this run of *The Ring* or not? would it be worth trying to get in later in the run?; and it also gives notice of the rise of talent, you know this young artist should be watched so you make a mental note to catch him next time, or this conductor who you've always taken rather for granted as a routiner seems to be entering a new golden age and there's a new breadth to his interpretation, so you make a mental note to catch them the next time. So there are actual practical functions to a review, it's not just an ephemeral thing that's gone. It's a record of an event and a consumer report and a marker for things to come." (pp. 463-464)

[NK] "That's the real problematical thing about classical music criticism for concerts, it's here today and gone tomorrow, and you're not even discussing an opera production which people can go back and see and disagree with. You are basically doing something that has ceased to be." (p. 431)

[EG] "...it was always a struggle from (19)64 onwards to get things in. I always felt it a struggle. But it got worse and worse really, it was just a gradual development. And indeed you see I was one of the first to argue that you have to justify a music notice of a concert, how do you do that, because you cannot justify it on the grounds that it was written for the people that were there, maybe three hundred, three thousand at most. You have to justify it, I've always said, you've got to make it relevant to people who aren't music lovers, and therefore bring them in....and I used to argue this even in the 1950s...the justification of an opera review is clear, you're giving advice, the justification of a record review is clear, you're giving advice, but for a concert review...that's been and gone, you've got to justify it in different terms and yet this was unquestioned I think, generally, until the late 1980s and then they all woke up to the same thing which I'd been saying thirty years before." (p. 422)

[TS] "Of course there was a tendency for the number of features to be increased because when Roger Alton came in (1986) he changed the layout of the page, it was still a broadsheet

page, but he was inclined to have far more of what I would call feature reviews, in other words instead of having a feature which was clearly an interview feature... or a column, he would want to have a review which he would give a lot of illustration to and which would somehow sex-up the page and make it apparently more interesting to the readers and that would tend to put pressure on space. Once you begin to have more pictures you have fewer words, it's as simple as that." (p. 503)

[HF] "We had a sort of weekly rota for doing the weekly record round up. I think records were on Saturdays weren't they. We were always shifting them around, and then they were on Fridays and then 'should we have them in the weekend thing or should they be in the main paper?' There was a dispute, there always has been, about actually was it a valid thing to have record reviews in a newspaper or should that only be for a music magazine? I mean there's always been debates about the amount of space given to record reviewing." (p. 404)

[HF] "(So there was an increase in previews and increase in features?) Well almost within that period the birth of both of those. They both took off and have been going strongly ever since really. This was all tied in with fierce competition with the birth of *The Independent*, the boom of the Thatcher years, trying to outstrip one another, trying to provide more and more to compete. It was an era of expansion really." (p. 401)

[HF] "...at the start of my career I could do up to twenty or twenty two/ twenty five reviews a month. The highest number I ever did was probably twenty five a month and it settled to twenty, eighteen, fifteen. Now I cannot remember the point at which it then settled to ten or twelve so that's definitely a decrease isn't it, in the number of reviews a month. But as far as word length is concerned, if anything we have more now. I can remember in the very early 1980s getting 223, they were that specific. Now I can get 450. But if you average it out I would say the average, apart from opera which is always a bit more, for an overnight concert review would be 350 words and I don't think that's changed much from 1981 to 2001, on average." (p. 406)

[HF] "I would say within the period we're talking about it, if anything it was the emphasis on features that pushed classical music reviews, elbowed them out a bit and made less space for them, and as I say I always feel guilty because I suggested that feature on Yehudi Menuhin which I think was the first classical music feature at *The Times*, certainly one of the first. But it used to be, I remember, visually the page was a pretty tight fit like a patchwork quilt of short reviews, well once you got a great big feature at the top with a great big photo, and this was thought to be terribly vulgar when it began, very down market and vulgar, it halved your space for reviews. So I would say within this period it (classical coverage) wasn't so much elbowed out by the other genres of music as by features." (p. 401)

[BN] "I started really on *The Independent* ... October 1986, writing short reviews... and then from I think it was October 1988 I started writing regular features... Fiona Maddocks and Thomas Sutcliffe and I agreed that was making the best use of what I was able to do. They averaged 1200 words those features, and of those there must be something like 300 over the late 1980s through the 1990s into the 2000s." (p. 451)

[BN] "There are two sorts of features, there are 'think-pieces' provoked by some sort of issue or some forthcoming event, preview pieces which go wider than just reviewing a specific event, and there are 'puff-pieces' – interviews with prima donnas or conductors or opera producers or designers or whatever, often only tangentially connected with music in fact but none the less filed under classical music because opera is classical music... this really started in the 1980s. I can remember there was a time in which all the features and many of the reviews, rather than being about the music, were about either opera production, you know outrage at the latest Wagner Ring which somebody had set in a power station and all that sort of stuff, and there'd be nothing about Wagner in this at all. Or there was this particular thing about authentic performance then, period instruments and so on. So it was always on about the way you played things and what instruments you used but again never about the music. Now that's all sort of died away because the period performance movement has sunk into the mainstream. It's had its effect and now that's gone... I mean there's still some reasonable preview pieces...but they're very rare now. It is mostly interview pieces, which are easy to do. Now the bad thing about this is that whereas a preview or a think-piece can be independent, a puff-piece is of course hand in glove with the agencies and the promoters and it's a circle, it's fine, the puff-piece appears, the concert is given by the prima donna, the concert is reviewed quite often by the person who did the interview and everybody is happy. Except that there is no independent critical what not involved at all practically, it's squeezed out. So it's essentially corrupt." (p. 461)

This issue of corruptness within the decision-making process which defined arts page content was echoed elsewhere:

[Anon. 10] "There was quite an interesting turnaround on *The Guardian* ... because newspapers had traditionally quite liked it when some outside festival or something said 'we invite you to Monaco for three days and then you can write something' but *The Guardian* sort of got very, very worried, and I'm not sure when this was, probably the end of the 1980s, about the potential for corruption that represented and they wouldn't let anyone go on any trips unless they themselves were willing to pay for it. *The Guardian* would put up money if they decided the project was worthwhile, they themselves would pay a certain amount for travel and accommodation, but they wouldn't accept offers from promoters of anything to take you somewhere." (p. 550)

[TS] "...something like a third of the people who look at *The Guardian's* website are in the United States...which is a huge number but that's because in a way *The Guardian* serves an appetite today which isn't catered for adequately by the newspaper provision in the States which is still very conservative and as you know is located in particular huge conurbations; whether you are in Houston or Dallas, there's always at least one local newspaper of note and that is...what they read. The *New York Times* does circulate but to a very small number outside the New York area. The *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, each of these places has their own paper and they have a correspondent; and the music critic in Seattle can't really write the truth about crap at the opera because he knows the guy who is putting it on. It's all part of local enterprise. They're doing what a friend of mine... used to call 'national service'; he would say 'critics doing national service' because they can't really say anything very bad because this is something that matters too much, you know 'we need to think that we are the best'. A lot of... cultural criticism, is really there to reassure the British reader that everything is in a good state and we're the best and everything is going wonderfully. There is this, so anybody who writes who is too critical puts their job at risk in fact." (p. 505)

Finally, many journalists reported that the shifts in editorial attitudes which occurred during the 1980s, in particular their increasing interference, mistrust of writers and loss of genuine concern for serious critical coverage of classical music, laid the foundations for many of the problems inherent in English broadsheet music criticism in the early 21st century:

[TS] "...it was their tolerance that enabled me float around getting to lots of press conferences, and getting to know people and doing all this stuff and giving, in a sense, the arts coverage of *The Guardian* a high profile. But the people in the office never understood that, they always resented the fact that I was sort of not in the office the whole time, although the interface between the real world of arts performance and culture and a newspaper, is of course a crucial, crucial aspect of how you actually get stuff to write about and how you get an understanding of it. Basically newspaper men, newspaper journalists have always believed that you can do almost all of it from within an office, but the fact is that the modern system encourages them to do that even more really... Basically there's a huge amount of suspicion from those who are putting together these newspapers, and editing them and getting the stuff on the page, great suspicion that we, those who actually get out and know about something are having the life of Reilly, a whale of a time spending their money or the profit or basically possibly being drunk or taking drugs or having sex or God knows what, and none of these things can be done in a newspaper office... The fact that I was seriously interested in opera and the theatre and music and knew about them, made me very suspicious to a lot of these people because their basic instinct, Editors, is that you should have somebody who likes these things but who is going to be as ignorant as the readers. Because if you have too much expertise then the writing may be less penetrable or it may assume too

much on the part of the reader. Now obviously that trade off is always a problem, it's a complicated trade off as you can see. But in the area of politics and sport the expertise is much more acknowledged than it is in cultural areas I think, and that's partly because politics is the primary motivation for most journalistic exercises. Journalists are in journalism because they want to wield power or they want to get closer to power, they want to change things, they are often idealistic, not always, sometimes very cynical in fact, but nevertheless that was one of their original motives. So politics is understood, it's like the lifeblood of journalism." (pp. 497-498)

[Anon. 6] "I think it would be fair to say that John (Higgins) had a view that criticism should be, as far as possible, objective and if he detected personal views coming in, whether they were positive or negative, he had a lower threshold there than I did. My writing was probably more personal than he would have liked and that was where the conflict arose. We had a very good working relationship and you are making me look back on that and I feel very fondly about John Higgins because he was involved and he cared and I've never worked with anybody since, well that's not quite true, but only very, very rarely have I worked with anybody since who has cared. It's much, much better to have somebody from *The Times* who will ring you up early in the morning and say 'this just won't do', than to have nothing, and maybe that's part of the decline that no longer is there anybody at editorial level who cares what people are writing." (p. 536)

[DS] "The subs job is to get people to read the piece and sometimes they just do that in a really, I think, irresponsible way. It happens all the time, and the people you are writing about always assume, and indeed most of the people who read it I expect, that you the writer are the person who has written the headline and all the bits around it, the strap-line or the picture caption, or whatever it is that's upset them, because yours is the only name that's up there and it's a real bug bear. It's a thing that constantly upsets and niggles, writers don't like it, and I don't like it very much, but you get immune." (pp. 486-487)

[BN] "We do now have a whole generation of people who are now in their fifties who were born into pop, these are supposedly adults, but they seem to have a teenager mentality, they still have this sort of fierce loyalty to the boy bands they love, to the football teams. I mean to hear these supposedly intelligent middle aged men going on with this sort of facetious religiosity about football, fast cars and so on, I find this a hideously alien culture and I fear the media is full of these people. I think there is a whole generation now that simply hasn't grown up and sees nothing wrong with the fact and think that that's what the world is like and that's what their readers want." (p. 463)

5.2.3 Genre prioritisation & hierarchies

A key aim of this study was to understand whether different music genres were treated hierarchically within the broadsheet press and, more importantly, whether or not those hierarchies changed between 1981 and 1991. In considering this issue, several interviewees affirmed the superiority of classical music, and indeed of London-centric classical music culture, for example:

[TS] “The northern editions were not printed in London they were printed in the north... at various stages we were printing in four or five centres and distributing from those centres so *The Guardian* was able to get out to a range of places with copy that was interesting to those localities. But that of course presents another problem - why is it that people living in the first edition areas, the edges, are assumed to be more interested in some tin-pot performance of *The Messiah* at a local church than finding out what’s going on in the capital where the best quality work is being done?

...I think that the superiority of what I would call serious music is unarguable. Of course there’s lots of lovely things in pop and rock music, there are good songs and bad songs, just as there are in classical music. But the fact is that the best of rock music, (e.g.) the best of The Beatles, is only a smallish song. The best in classical music is, you know, the sky is the limit. It may be a structure which has an enormous range of emotional colour, of narrative, of rhetoric of material that relates to life issues. I mean obviously a very good Beatles song, and there are some wonderful ones, also relates to life issues, it has words, it touches on things, but it is still a miniature form and I think that one of the real problems about this so called democratisation is the failure to understand the difference between what I would called small miniaturistic endeavours and material which needs to be taken seriously... we need to have a sense of proportion, we need to say ‘what matters? What is the culture that people need to be able to use, that they need to be able to appreciate? Are they as well served, people in lower class communities up and down this country, by simply popular music which never touches upon any of this matter?’ ...I do believe there are absolute values in culture. I do believe that some things are of infinite importance and that was a very uncomfortable position to adopt in a newspaper world where there is a great anxiety about the rightness and where in a newspaper like *The Guardian* where democratisation and elitism are seen as being counter-poles and where there is a deep lack of sympathy for what would be considered elitist. I was always seen as being an upper class person working at *The Guardian* by people who were spuriously working class and I wasn’t upper class at all, it was all nonsense really. But there was this feeling that because I liked opera that somehow I was out of touch with ordinary people. Of course we all know that if there was a culture in this country like in Germany then the opera houses and the theatres would be full of ordinary people. But if you start charging the sort of prices that people have to pay to go to the opera is it any surprise that (the audiences) are all old.” (pp. 500-501)

However, several journalists described the changing fortunes of the different genres which they had witnessed since the early 1980s:

[DS] "...there probably is a bit of a hierarchy and certainly there was at that time... In the period 1981 to 1991 it was very much the case that rock and pop was the poor relation...back then it was always going to be the classical person, the dance person or the theatre person, who would be in charge of the arts... pop and rock was held, very much I think, in somewhat lesser regard than the other arts at that time... It changed, well as I said when *The Independent* came along, that really was the first time it got any attention at all and the first time that rock and pop was taken even remotely seriously... *The Independent* led the way really, in terms of bringing it in from the cold if you like, in terms of giving it more status, more attention, more prestige...they eventually realised, they would give all this space to some play or some opera or some latest production of Swan Lake which had captured the imagination of all the highbrow critics and people in the newspapers, and yet one show by Meatloaf or someone would have about ten times the amount of people going to it. I mean in terms of the audience figures, it always amazes me that they always gave film such prominence, and took it so seriously, and yet if you compare the number of people who go to concerts compared to the number of people who go to a film, the numbers are hugely in favour of pop. But it's always been, in terms of artistic value or something, it's traditionally held to be of somewhat lesser value."(p. 484)

[RS] "The *Sunday Times* had loads of music critics and yes I mean the classical guys would get first dibs on the good space although increasingly I think the Editor started to question that, the Editor of the newspaper not the Editor of the section. I suppose the period you are talking about was a period of crossover in terms of the way that music was perceived. It went in that period from being very much 'oh well we'd better do something on this just to keep the younger readers happy', it was done grudgingly basically, but by the end of the period it was being embraced and it was being seen as a core to the arts coverage as it is now. I mean now... the *Telegraph* has three pages of music coverage on a Thursday... that would have been inconceivable in the period you are talking about." (pp. 474-475)

[DG] "popular music tended to be tagged on the end of things. What really got the space, when I started, was classical music and opera... there was always a whole team of classical music writers and opera people. They went along with the theatre, cinema, concerts and opera, and then after that came the other stuff which included popular music and other things, light entertainment...It was the hierarchy...the balance between them was certainly changing over the course of that decade. Pop music became so much more dominant. At the same time, the amount of space kept increasing, because the papers got bigger... on the whole, pop music got vastly, vastly, vastly more than anything else." (pp. 410-411)

[DG] “There was this thing called the Critics’ Circle, which was a very posh and smart affair...and the Critics’ Circle was theatre, opera, classical music. I don’t know if they may have had the odd cinema person. I remember Peter Hepple, of *The Stage*, (being) full of it because this guy had been elected to the Critics’ Circle and he was only a general light entertainment writer, which he thought was a great thing... It (the hierarchy) changed because the people changed. It only reflects the people that are in charge of things. It seems like the serious performing arts of today are only the popular arts of the day before. The people grew up and made them important. ... what you were a fan of when you were young suddenly gets to be important when you are the Arts Editor of a newspaper.” (pp. 410-411)

[DG] “There was a sudden great burst and everybody suddenly discovered jazz in 1986.” (p. 416)

[DS] “...all the technology changed... So what happened was the coverage of everything expanded dramatically... there was pretty much plenty for everyone...But certainly the Friday page now is the complete reverse of how it ever used to be, it’s all dominated by pop and rock and you maybe get one little piece about a classical person that’s shoved in there.” (p. 485)

[PG] “I think (the hierarchy) changed. John Higgins... was very committed to classical music, opera and theatre. He had a vision of *The Times* arts coverage being serious. That didn’t mean it couldn’t be witty as well but it had to deal with serious things at a decent length. I’m quite sure he would never have gone through choice to hear a Birtwistle piece but he knew Birtwistle was important and given him serious attention. I think it changed after he left... something changed in newspaper culture which may have had to do with the beginning of the internet and people beginning to get information in other ways. But I left in early 1992 and certainly well by then there was strong pressure to not cover so many concerts, to cover them more briefly, to do round-ups where you covered three or four concerts in one piece. I don’t think that was because classical music was being pushed down the hierarchy in favour of jazz or rock or whatever, I don’t think it was that. But in general the space that the newspaper wanted to give to reviews was decreasing.” (p. 427)

One journalist located the hierarchy change, at least in *The Observer*, outside the period covered by this study, namely in the 1990s:

[NK] “Certainly in the early 1980s it was totally dominated by classical music. Everybody assumed that classical music was the most important thing and there would be occasional notices or pages devoted to pop once a week or something, but the regular stuff of music criticism was classical music. Now as I say, I can’t say that I noticed any significant change in that before 1992 when I stopped doing it. I would say that it’s really the following decade

that has seen pop take over from classical as the dominant genre... But I don't think that reflects inaccurately the way those genres of music were perceived in the outside world really. I think it began to change pretty dramatically in the 1990s but I wouldn't link that to Thatcherism, I would link it to the emergence of New Labour and the sort of whole 'cool Britannia' movement which was a little bit consciously anti-elitist, and the sort of perception that classical music was a slightly elitist activity, although we know it isn't, gained ground. I think probably popular music and jazz and rock and pop had been unfairly minimised in coverage and I think there was a sudden realisation that this is what people were actually listening to and to get to a new audience they really wanted to cover that. So I can't really say that the emergence of regular popular music criticism affected the coverage of classical music in my time at all, and again you'd have to prove that or not by looking at the statistics, but I would say I was still writing a solid 1200 words a week for *The Observer* and it was well displayed and prominent until 1992... I would say until 1991 that the papers were all committed to having classical music critics and that that was absolutely unquestioned. Again I think if you talk to people that the real change would have been in the 1990s in terms of there being less work for people." (pp. 433-435)

From its outset in 1986, *The Independent* was described as featuring rock and pop coverage near the top of the hierarchy, awarding the genres equal prominence and seriousness to classical music:

[Anon. 8] "There were two pop writers, Dave Hill and Andy Gill... who got quite a lot of space, that was a new thing to give that much space to rock and pop. (Why did they decide to do that?) Because it was a young newspaper with a young team of people who wanted to read about it and that was absolutely right. But they also took it quite seriously. They considered rock and pop to be ... as worthy of taking seriously as classical music. There was a sort of a world of debate within rock and pop which maybe hadn't really been aired particularly but they got two writers who were capable of engaging with the issues rather than just saying 'ah great, new whatever from...'. So they were also writing to a higher level." (p. 540)

[MO] "I think even at that stage, in the mid 1980s, the coverage for rock and pop was well ahead of the coverage of classical music... they got the most space. I mean some days were devoted to one kind of area and other days were devoted to another, but rock and pop got the most space, although not for reviewing so much as the whole coverage, there were far more interviews, pictures, general stuff. It's always been quite hard to get features about classical music into newspapers and it's got harder and harder... *The Guardian* was going very much the same way, they were all going the same way actually... *The Guardian* was quite keen to broaden its appeal as much as possible and also try to get a younger readership. Though I always thought that was a fallacy because young people are not going to buy a newspaper

because they can read a review of a rock concert in it. Why would they? I mean they *go* to the rock concert.” (p. 467)

5.2.4 Media and publishing environment changes

Interviewees were asked whether any advances in the media climate between 1981 and 1991 affected their work or English broadsheet music criticism in general. In responding, many cited the arrival of *The Independent* newspaper in 1986 as particularly significant:

[DS] “*The Independent* came along in 1986 and the whole landscape changed, pretty much overnight to be honest, because they took pop and rock very seriously indeed, and it coincided with the expansion of pop and rock into the mainstream media in all sorts of different ways. *Q* magazine also started at the same time, in 1986, and that was a new era as well, because that was a very different sort of magazine to *NME* which had become very niche... *Q* reconnected a generation of readers whose interests in pop and rock had lapsed, and that in turn triggered an interest amongst general readers of broadsheet newspapers... I always remember *The Independent*, opening it one week shortly after it started up, had a *whole* page advert for a Pogues album... and that sent out a big message to the whole broadsheet industry that this was a serious business... The Pogues, which were not a big division or league one band, were prepared to pay for a whole page advert for an album, and everybody woke up. Suddenly *The Guardian* really locked horns with them ... and so every Friday they would do something; and finally, *The Times* also got more serious about it, it was still quite a long time after that before we actually got a proper Friday section, but the main point is that they realised rock and pop needed to be taken a lot more seriously; and even though the Arts Editor didn't like it very much, he was pretty unsympathetic, he had to move on a bit and I'd certainly credit *The Independent*, and *Q* magazine, with changing a lot of things. (p. 482)

...another change that *The Independent* ushered in was the listings... They were very big on listings so suddenly we had to be very big on listings ... back then I had to do it all, and I just had to sit there laboriously going through all the *NME*'s, no internet, no Google... you had to just go laboriously through the *NME* or *Time Out*, obviously for London, or *Melody Maker*. It was always *Melody Maker* I used because it had all the small ads. So I'd go through *Melody Maker* to find out where all the tours were, and you had to list every bloody single bloody thing. So Monday, you'd be starting with Monday the following week, you'd have to list maybe five shows that day all around the country, add a little tag line of what it was and the price and the phone number. I mean it was the most unbelievably laborious job. Nowadays no-one in house would do that, they would farm that out. So listings became a big thing and have remained as such ever since. But it was all very ad hoc at that point. Everything's always done in a panic... it's just basically 'Oh Christ *The Independent*'s got listings, we'd better get some listings, call Sinclair and get him to do something' ... It's always the funniest thing as well, when *The Guardian* comes up with something you just

know that two months later we're going to do the same, i.e. G2 arrives so voila 'I think we're going to start a new supplement T2', there's an awful lot of mimicry and looking over your shoulder that goes on." (p. 486)

[HF] "I would almost say that certain new ideas put forward by *The Times* were in a knee jerk reaction to what *The Independent* was doing... it really had a huge effect." (p. 405)

[HF] "...maybe it was 1983 they started, I'm not sure... but we had this new insert called *Preview*, very naively named, just *Preview* and Richard Williams was the Editor. He set that up and it was decided that we should provide this service, I might be slightly inaccurate, I mean maybe *The Independent* did it first and we immediately copied it or maybe we invented it, again you'd have to just double check because things were happening so fast then. But this was all to do with competition and what a newspaper could provide over and above what the rest of the newspapers could provide, and this service to readers (was) providing them with a free *Time Out* really, you didn't have to pay for a *Time Out* anymore, it would be within your paper. People probably don't realise that that never existed, that was something brand new and it kicked off enormously, it's an industry in itself now, it's a pull-out in itself." (p. 401)

[RS] "My impression was that (*The Independent*) was quite important yes, because they had this music page. They had a Tuesday music feature and I think they were the first people to really allocate space to music in that way. So every Tuesday there'd be Dave Hill, as it usually was, writing a big feature...he was appointed *The Independent's* pop critic and he would write these big essays. He was very much in the Simon Frith sort of sociological school and he tended to like things that had some kind of relationship to some underclass interest or ethnic minority interest or something like that. But he was given good space and that was noticed. ...*The Independent*, well that was something the broadsheets took notice of because it was a highly successful new launch newspaper. It had quite a seismic influence when it started, influential way beyond its circulation... but it was very much the sort of thing that other journalists paid attention to; and again I wasn't privy to these conversations but my impression is that once *The Independent* started giving serious regular space to music everyone else felt they had to do the same. That was much more influential than *Q* magazine." (pp. 478-479)

[TS] "...the competition actually meant everybody became more self-conscious about whether they got it right and whether the readers would prefer to have this or that, and there was much less confidence in the idea that we would set our own course and we would cover this stuff and we would do it come what may. *The Guardian* could have done that because *The Guardian* was a charity, it's not profit making, it runs by the Scott Trust, so *The Guardian* had this right to do that but it sort of hasn't really sort of used that right. It's

turned its back on all that and wanted to be a success and Alan Rusbridger earns £370,000 pounds a year and that's more important to him than, as it were, fulfilling perhaps the virtuous duty of *The Guardian* as it was created." (p. 506)

[MO] "I wonder actually if *Time Out* wasn't an influence on *The Independent*, because it had that same sort of scattergun approach to reviews." (p. 468)

[NK] "... when *The Independent* started it was incredibly traditional in the way it approached (criticism) ... which was actually helpful because it reinforced the idea that it was a worthwhile way of doing it." (p. 434)

It seemed too that the writers who contributed to the newly launched *Independent* newspaper were also given the freedom to apply their own personal critical style:

[MO] "(Did they say 'we're a new publication and this is the style we want you to adopt', were they quite prescriptive about what they wanted at the start?) No, not at all. Absolutely not at all. Obviously if they didn't like what you did you wouldn't get asked again, but you just sort of did it and saw how it worked out." (p. 466)

Fiona Maddocks, Music Editor of *The Independent* from its launch, along with other journalists who contributed to the publication's early editions, explained how *The Independent* set itself apart from its longer-established counterparts, firstly by providing regional coverage courtesy of numerous freelance writers based across the country (Appendix BBB) and secondly by fostering a new mindset in its approach to arts coverage:

[FM] "*The Independent* was really trying to break open and do completely different arts coverage. Indeed I think now it's impossible even for me to remember how innovative that arts coverage was because really it set the agenda for arts coverage right across the broadsheets ever since. It was interesting for me because my first conversation with the founder Editor, Andreas Whittam Smith, was about Marriage of Figaro... So that was the kind of environment; that doesn't mean everybody across the paper felt the same about classical music, it was still a minority (interest), but it was taken very seriously as something that had to be covered in as much depth as limited space in a daily newspaper could allow... (*The Independent*) ... was influenced by a liberal minded, small 'l', attitude towards covering things that had either not been covered before or were deserving of more space. There was a big commitment to the 'new' rather than only the mainstream South Bank concert hall kind of events. If something was new, as long as it had some validity, it would take priority over a performance of a Beethoven symphony. (So contemporary music?) Was very important; and on something like the second or third day of *The Independent*, which was late October 1986... I suggested writing an article about a sound studio on the South Bank involving

Boulez and Harrison Birtwistle and someone else and this was thought to be a great idea. Now I don't think that that would be true now... (p. 438)

The Saturday music page; the elements within it were, I think, there was usually Bayan's piece, maybe a couple of reviews, and then we had a kind of diary that usually I wrote, not always, but that hadn't really been done before; I think all these things now happen automatically, it was really just like adding fresh seasoning to something that was already being done but nobody had really looked at it and thought 'is there a way would could turn it upside down a bit and make it a bit more lively?'" (p. 445)

[FM] "... it was a very pivotal time. *The Independent* wasn't really part of that because it was still taking music in that sense in an old fashioned sort of quite serious way, it was just trying to let fresh air into the way it covered it, but it wasn't caught up in this need to popularise everything and need to be accessible... (*The Independent*) was a very classy thing. It was like a very smart shop but not one that doesn't expect everybody to feel happy to go into it, we're not talking Harrods we're talking something much more wacky, because it was very quirky, very independent minded." (p. 444)

[BN] "I think there was a general bias in *The Independent* when it started towards the high arts, I think that would be fair to say. That was part of the ethos of the paper." (p. 452)

[MO] "*The Independent* was sort of trying to stand up for solid journalistic values and not go the Murdoch way, it tried to avoid hype, hard-selling and celebrity culture." (p. 468)

[Anon. 10] "...it was all on a hot needle and a burnt thread anyway. I mean they were quite confident for the first five months or something and then they began to realise that the money was running out, I mean the ownership changed... at some point the co-operative way it was set up changed and Tony O'Reilly bought it... I mean he's just a real tycoon type, like the other newspaper owners. He doesn't interfere particularly but it's all about money. So *The Independent* didn't really have very long to carry out its self-imposed mission before it just fell into the ways of other newspapers." (p. 550)

As the database analysis (Chapter 3) revealed a significant increase in the number and size of pictures which accompanied music-related articles, particularly in the years following the launch of *The Independent*, interviewees were asked whether they too had observed this change and how, if at all, it had affected their writing:

[HF] "...*The Independent* ... made their mark of course with photo journalism... which also helped one in a way in placing features...; getting lovely big photos in of your subject which of course you don't do with overnight reviews. So it broadened the brief of the music critic because gradually features were becoming more and more welcome because a) they

broadened the readership as it was seen and b) they provided photo opportunities to compete with or get equal with or be better than *The Independent*... (p. 398) It seems to me that there was more and more interest devoted to pictures and less and less to words.” (p. 402)

[BN] “... (articles) were always illustrated. Now they might be with photographs and so on in which case I would discuss with the Music Editor and so on, but very often they were illustrated with a drawing usually by Michael Daley who was the sort of regular illustrator of the paper. The paper had a lot of graphic work then in the late 1980s and early 1990s so I would ring him up, often before I’d written the piece and say ‘what I’m going to write about is such and such’ and he would come up with a sort of design, often very ingenious and very decorate and extremely skilful, and we had a nice relationship over this and I really enjoyed this, it was a sort of extra dimension to the thing... They set great store on the paper looking handsome and distinctive.” (p. 452)

[RS] “(you never knew) ...whether some senior Editor had come in and said ‘oh well she’s a woman, we need a bit more female presence on the page so let’s print that picture of her bigger’. There’s all sorts of calculations that newspapers make which go way beyond anything to do with what the writer, or even his immediate Editor think.... I mean if you’re dealing with a young attractive woman they’re more likely to print a big picture of her than some gnarly old bloke essentially... (and) (t)hey’re much more likely to print a picture of someone big and famous than they are of somebody who isn’t.” (p. 474)

In the same way that the emergence of *The Independent* altered the course of broadsheet music coverage, the disappearance of other publications were also cited as significant during the period under review:

[BN] “... some things in the musical publications which had been very valuable, disappeared. I cut my teeth... on a rag called *Music and Musicians*... I then began to write for *The Listener*. *The Listener* was a weekly like the *New Statesman* and *The Spectator*, published by the BBC and its original purpose had been to print the scripts of talks. I remember the old advertisement for it which said ‘catch the fleeting word in print’ which you would see on tube stations in the 1950s and so on. But it expanded into a sort of general magazine which had a reviews section and features section, a very good books section, and it had a very, very distinguished history of literary editors and it was a very, very important magazine. The BBC killed it off in 1991/ 1992 thereabouts, but I wrote quite a lot of stuff for them at one time or another and it was a very, very valuable publication... *Music and Musicians* finally folded, again I think in the late 1980s.” (pp. 454-455)

[NK] “I don’t know if you know those magazines that used to exist called *Music and Musicians*, *Dance and Dancers*, *Plays and Players*, there was a whole stable of them, they

were monthly magazines that ran out of a place in Victoria where a lot of us cut our teeth before we ever got onto the broadsheets, and the fact that they ceased to exist meant it was much more difficult for people to get a foothold in newspapers and daily criticism because there was nowhere for them to practice first.” (p. 434)

[TS] “...*Music and Musicians*, when I went to it (1970), was a sort of opera fanzine with a certain amount about classical music... There were reviews, there were not very many features. The features end of the paper, the front end of the paper, most of that stuff was in fact reviews glorified with lots of pictures. So what I did was increase the pagination, to increase the pay to the people writing the reviews so that we paid them £10 per 1000 words, and often we didn’t pay them and it was a very hand to mouth magazine. I used to say to people when we commissioned them ... ‘we may not pay you immediately, I’m terribly sorry it’s terribly difficult getting money out of the publisher’.” (pp. 501-502)

[FM] “The death of *The Listener* magazine (1991), which was then considered the popular intelligent (magazine), it wasn’t only about music, but it was considered the lighter end of writing seriously about music. It was for an intelligent readership. But when you look at it now, if you find an old copy of it, lighter end meant 1000 words on the new Luigi Nono piece but written in a way that wasn’t for a musicological quarterly. But that was considered too stuffy by the BBC who axed it, they wanted a glossy magazine.” (p. 444)

Some interviewees described how particular events in the wider music media arena influenced journalistic approaches to music criticism:

[RS] “I think the entire perception of popular or rockular music, whatever you want to call it, changed quite dramatically around the time of Live Aid...attendance at stadium concerts went up; the whole idea that rock and pop music was in some way a sort of counter culture thing which had sort of stumbled along for the best part of twenty years - there was a major realignment of thinking on that. To see so many of these familiar big names on the stage feeding the world and all the rest of it, big media event... that heralded a seismic change in the thinking... So I think (from) 1985 it made it much more socially acceptable than it ever had been before... (i)t took a lot of the kind of counter-cultural cache away, and it acknowledged the fact that pop and rock music was really a part of the larger family of entertainment really; show-business. Which of course, you know, for fifteen or twenty years since rock had first been invented it had prided itself on being something quite separate... (pp. 475-476)

Compact disc was big, that was a huge thing. What compact disc did very interestingly, and this is one of the things that *Q* realised, was it focussed people’s minds on the history of the genre. So it suddenly became much more accepted and fashionable to look back, because for a long time pop music really was about the latest thing; and then around the time of compact

disc, and it wasn't just compact disc it was the age of the people who'd grown up with it, suddenly everyone became slightly more retrospective in their approach, or if not actually retrospective there was a sense in which the whole thing was a continuous present. I mean when Sergeant Pepper was released on CD it went back into the charts again. So the past suddenly came steaming back into the present again which it hadn't for quite a while, and that had a big effect on obviously the way that people such as myself wrote, and the entire orientation of people's attitude towards popular music. So once somebody's got a history like that it becomes a bit more like some of the other arts, it becomes more respectable and this again relates to what I was saying about Live Aid. I would say the two big events of the 1980s, were the advent of CD and Live Aid. They're the big two." (pp. 477-478)

[TS] "...live performances are really bad things to be interested in really because only a few people can get into these spaces... In terms of consumer guidance... in a way the invention of recording and of video recording and the arrival of television and radio have completely transformed how people come to all this material and what they're interested in reading about." (p. 498)

5.2.5 The consequences of the Wapping Dispute

Many interviewees depicted the artisan newspaper production practices which existed in the early 1980s, prior to the computerisation of the production technology introduced in the wake of the Wapping dispute of 1986 (see Appendix CCC). However, most were also keen to describe what they considered to be dramatic consequences both on their own work and broadsheet music criticism generally. For example one interviewee described being shunned by musicians:

[RS] "Lots of people (artists) wouldn't talk to me ... I remember famously, two or three years afterwards, I was taken down to Brighton by the press people who represented the Housemartins, and the drummer of the Housemartins... wouldn't talk to me... he simply refused to talk to me. This happened quite a lot. There was a lot of animosity. Because like I said, in those days, especially for the younger ones, being in a rock band was still felt to entail a political stance... there were lots of people who wouldn't talk to the *Sunday Times*. That incident sticks in my mind as the most direct but there were loads of them. Sarah Jane Morris, I did a profile of her... she wouldn't talk to the *Sunday Times* but they wanted to do her anyway so I did do a sort of lame profile. Who else, oh, there's too many to mention. Oh Dick Gaughan, he wouldn't talk to me. He's a Scottish folk singer who I went to review as part of a Glasgow Arts Festival. It was a very live issue for most of the end of the 1980s basically." (pp. 476-477)

Some interviewees described how the dispute had not only affected their writing but also changed their working practices irrevocably, for example:

[HF] "It was an absolutely seminal change in the whole of newspaper production, and we were right in the thick of it. You see now we don't go into the building at all but then we were expected to go in quite a lot because we weren't using email, we didn't have home computers, you were expected to go into the office even if you were of freelance status, once a month once a week even, I can't remember, but a lot, to see your Editor to talk about things, to pick up your post, even to deliver copy by hand. During the dispute we had to be bussed in in armoured coaches ... (from) secret points so that the pickets with weapons couldn't bang you over the head... I mean it was physical, it was violent... There was one I remember at Charing Cross Station, Embankment and the coaches were armoured so that no one could break the window, and being bussed in in an armoured coach and having razor wire, I mean Fortress Wapping it was called, it seems hardly imaginable now, but such was the strength of feelings and distrust on both sides. I think the writers were absolutely caught, I mean we all had our different loyalties at the time, but you know both sides were behaving badly, of necessity, and it was totally unpleasant for everybody. It certainly made me think of leaving completely, of giving up my job and doing something else, and some people did, or you gritted your teeth and thought 'well this can't go on forever', as indeed it didn't. But it definitely affected morale, I would say it definitely made writing harder because it sort of poisoned everything and it set up a level of people watching over each other's shoulders and it set up a level of paranoia and defensiveness and insecurity which took an awful long while to go, because everyone was watching each other's backs and wondering which side you were on." (p. 403)

[PG] "Well before 1986... reviews nearly always appeared the next morning and that meant that you had to have phoned in your copy by 11.30pm on the night of the event, well you either went into the newspaper office or you phoned it in, one or the other. Even if an opera finished at 11pm it had to be done by 11.30pm, so those reviews written before 1986 were written very, very fast. In some cases, I remember once I was given 900 words to write and I had half an hour. So there isn't much time for planning the shape or having second thoughts, you really have to accept any words that pop into your head and scribble them down when you are writing at that kind of rate... So you'd have 325 words for a concert, or 500 words for a concert or whatever it was, and you had to fill that space. So the amount of space that was there was dependent on things that were completely irrelevant like whether or not there was a big interview, like how big a photograph of the interview subject they wanted to have, how much advertising had appeared right at the last minute. So you might go to what you consider to be a very, very important concert and there'd be only 250 words because there'd been an advert and you'd had the space shaved off, or you might go to what you thought was a very run of the mill concert and have to write 600 words. There was no discussion about that, that was fixed. But after 1986 when reviews were never going in on the day you had the option then of saying 'well this is a really great concert I want 450 words' and then (the Editor might say) 'well we can't do that, but you can have 400' or whatever. There was

much more dialogue, and also then you had the possibility then of not reviewing at all. Now occasionally it would happen that you would go to a concert, particularly a debut concert, and it would be so lamentable that you really didn't want to say anything, but up to 1986 you had to say something because the space was there in the paper, the space was laid out on the page and you had to fill it. So the task really radically changed about the middle of this period.

(Because of the technology?) Why modern technology should decelerate rather than accelerate I never understood, but that is what happened. I very much regretted that because I thought part of the strength of newspaper reviewing was that you were getting news, it was a 'news' paper, and just as it would have seemed rather strange to read in Wednesday's paper what had happened in parliament on Monday so to me it seemed a bit strange to read what had happened in the Festival Hall on Monday. I thought that was not what we should be doing but I could never get anybody to explain to me why we had to do it that way or why we couldn't do it as we had done before. I think also for audience members, I don't know about musicians... it's very different if you go to a concert and then you go and have your dinner, or you go back home, and you sleep and there in the morning is a review of the concert you went to last night while it's still fresh in your memory. That's a very, very different experience to reading it the next day. A colossal difference." (p. 426)

5.2.6 The golden age and narratives of decline

Interviewees were asked whether they felt that a golden age of music criticism had ever existed, both generally and with respect to their particular genre specialism, and if so what factors defined it as such and in turn what conditions contributed to its demise. Interestingly many of the rock and pop music critics voiced similar views:

[DS] "...there were two golden ages really; there was one around the time of the early 1970s when two of my favourite writers came up, Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent... Those two guys started writing for the *NME*, there was a whole bunch of other ones around them who totally brought rock journalism into the modern era... and then there was the era in the late 1970s with Julie Burchill, Tony Parsons and that mob... Then I think around the 1980s, the early 1980s, rock got kind of very insular. Rock criticism and rock writing got very self-referential... It's as if it turned inwards on itself and I think it was about the mid 1980s, 1986 when *Q* came along and ... *The Independent* started up, that was when they actually broke out of that ... but I think it was very inaccessible in that period... I think the *NME* in particular had become pretty unreadable about that time... There were no concessions to anyone, certainly not the reader... The one thing *Q* did that was revolutionary was they actually made the writer's by-line very small... and it was considered very odd because the person they were writing about was suddenly the focus... but back then in the *NME* days it was the writer that was considered more important than the person they were writing about." (p. 487)

[RC] “The thing perhaps about the *NME* in the early/middle 1980s was that you had a whole bunch of writers who were actually gifted writers and had very different approaches to the business of writing about music. In other words they all had a good command of language and interesting things to say but they approached it from a whole bunch of different perspectives. I think again what something like *Q* did was to homogenise all that. You had to write in a certain style to be in *Q*, and ever since then that’s almost been like the blueprint for all music writing for a so-called adult audience. Whereas the *NME* has gone the other way and is more youth orientated...I don’t think there was any one golden age of music writing but I do think that now the homogeneity of so much of it is very disappointing, and I think there are good writers but they tend to be hidden away... and unfortunately there are a lot of people who are content to follow the *Q* blueprint.” (p. 369)

[RS] “I think that the writing in the 1970s was really good and the reasons for that were partly to do with the access that journalists had to the musicians themselves, they were able to go on the road with people and get much closer to it. They felt much closer to it because pop and rock weren’t as diffuse as they are now...In the 1980s it did become much more a branch of the marketing department. I was very conscious of that, I had nothing like the access to the artists. I was really being called upon to help to flog a concert or an album or whatever it might be... it’s become steadily professionalized because, and I count myself at the tail end of this, most rock critics sort of did it because they saw they couldn’t do anything else and they were hooked on the music, and then in the 1980s it gradually became much more something that people set out to do as part of a media career and I suppose yes that did make the writing rather bland and less interesting.” (p. 475)

[RD] “The 1960s was a much more conservative era than people pretend now, they think it was all wild and wonderful but it wasn’t it was actually very conservative and these things were happening at quite a small level... and it wasn’t until the 1970s that it broke through to the mainstream and there were vast amounts of money around and one got flown everywhere every weekend. You’d get a phone call saying ‘do you want to go and see The Grateful Dead tomorrow in San Francisco?’ and things like that, and you’d be at the BBC one Friday afternoon and somebody would ring up and say ‘what are you doing over the weekend?’ and you’d say ‘nothing’ and they’d say ‘OK, we’re sending a package around to you’ and the package had in it an invite to The Who’s album launch at Universal Studios in Los Angeles and clipped to the back of that was an air ticket and clipped to the back of that was a three-day pass for the Sunset Marquis which was an extremely nice little hotel in Los Angeles. But there was a time in the 1970s, and a bit in the 1980s, when the money around in the rock and roll (business) was actually quite silly.” (p. 389)

[RD] “once the broadsheets started taking all this stuff on and taking it into the mainstream if you like, then there became less and less a role for the specialist rock and pop papers and

probably some of their writers swapped across and started writing for the broadsheets.” (p. 391)

In terms of classical music criticism, a commercial boom in music production was cited as heralding a downward turn during the 1980s:

[NK] “I think everybody looks to the time slightly before themselves as the golden age, but I think there was a golden age of classical music criticism which was when Desmond Shawe-Taylor was in *The Sunday Times*, Peter Heyworth was in *The Observer*, William Mann and Stanley Sadie were on *The Times* and people like Edward Greenfield were on *The Guardian*. But maybe I’m just saying that because those are the people that I grew up with reading so those are the ones I admired most. But they were 1960s early 1970s. I don’t know whether any of us who came after that really had the same authority that they did. I think we were more journalists as it were, which is fair enough and I think what we did was a whole lot more interesting than what the critics are able to do today because they are so restricted in the amount of space that they have, and I think there isn’t now the commitment on the part of the papers to classical music criticism today which makes them all a bit depressed. We were all more optimistic I think. Also remember that we were living through a huge boom time in the classical music industry generally of course, the arrival of the CD in the mid-1980s and then The Three Tenors and then Nigel Kennedy and the Four Seasons, this was a huge growth time, unrealistic, unrealistic growth time for which one then paid the price in the 1990s when interest began to level off. I don’t think interest is any less now than it has been, certainly not in live events like *The Proms*, they absolutely flourish, but I think there were over expectations caused by the fact that at the end of the 1980s there was this enormous boom. So I think that is why my perception is that changes in the value of classical music criticism in the papers didn’t really start before the early 1990s, because there was a big boom going on and people were not going to cut back on coverage at that time.” (p. 435)

[FM] “The Three Tenors, (they) changed everything... The idea of classical music being popular had not occurred (before), that’s really important, that’s very, very important. Classical music wasn’t even called classical music, it was just accepted that it had a weighty importance (and) that you tried to make as lively and interesting because you cared about it. But the minute The Three Tenors happened it became commercial, or it had commercial potential...(combined with)... the birth of the CD and a whole different way of selling classical music, and that’s really crucial. Ofrah Harnoy, a cellist, I don’t know what year Vanessa Mae started, when she did her naked sort of wet T-shirt advertising, but it all happened around the same time, probably two or three years after we’re talking about, but early 1990s. But Ofrah Harnoy was definitely during my time at *The Independent*... , she had a marketing campaign that showed her with, it wasn’t too exciting, an off the shoulder sexy dress and was on the tubes and that kind of place; it’s not that it caused prurient stir it’s

just that it had never happened before in classical music; people just didn't try to sell classical music in the same sort of way, they sold it by saying 'Beethoven, the symphonies' not 'Ofrah Harnoy, the cellist' and that was a definite turning point. The Three Tenors ... absolutely catapulted the idea of music being a popular or potentially a market grabber, and off the back of that I was asked to found *BBC Music Magazine*, specifically because the BBC thought 'Three Tenors, total new audience for classical music' and it was also what spawned Classic FM... *BBC Music Magazine* started in September 1992, and Classic FM started (shortly after) and it was really the end of an era. It was the beginning of the division between an old way of very straight forward, quite intellectually based coverage of music where you could talk about quite serious things that you'd try to make popular but essentially you were expecting people to find their way in, whereas this whole new world of discovery, which actually divided audiences yet again because there were the people who did only want *Nessun Dorma* and the people who did only want a hour of a Bruckner symphony and somehow the twain had to try and meet in new publications like this. So those years in *The Independent* were really a lead up to that. I think that absolutely changed the whole of music journalism... I think that was an absolute turning point though and it's really important to see that the period you're covering was absolutely teetering on a whole new way of dealing with classical music, which by then had to be called 'classical music'." (pp. 443-444)

This challenge to the hegemonic status of classical music in the 1980s was noted by other interviewees:

[HF] "A crucial point happened... I've a feeling it might have been about 1991 or 1992... where when you had a strap or a heading or a division within a Saturday magazine or something (it) used to say 'music', 'jazz', 'pop', 'rock'. Now 'music' was what was understood as classical music. You'd then qualify it by saying pop music, rock music, jazz but 'music' meant classical. Now the exact reverse is true, so if people talk about 'music' they mean what I call popular music, rock, jazz, folk, rap anything you like, hip hop and if you want to know that you're talking about Mozart and Beethoven you have to use the word 'classical' music. Now that was to me a very significant point in journalism, when the headings and the straps began to become 'classical music' rather than 'music'. ... listings happened during this crucial decade too, the birth of listings. Now again at the beginning of that period the headings would be 'music', 'jazz', 'rock', 'folk' and that 'music' was understood to be classical music. Now under listings you'll get 'music' and then all the various genres and then at the end this thing called 'classical music' which is a small, elitist, special interest (listing). That was a big change. I wouldn't say it happened between 1981 and 1991 but definitely between 1981 and say 1995... At the start of my career if you said 'music' people knew you meant classical and you'd have to say pop or rock if that's what you meant. It's a very significant thing." (p. 400)

[FM] “Even back then already there was a sense of classical music, as it wasn’t then called, it was just called music, everything else had names but music was classical music, that there was a notion that it was already being downgraded as a serious art form and that other art forms, visual arts particularly, were coming into their own at that point.” (p. 438)

Many classical music critics associated an increased editorial demand for ‘accessible’ writing, intended to appeal to the generalist as opposed to specialist reader, with the beginning of the decline in critical standards:

[HF] “...it was a decade of change, if there was any one thing it would be to be more ‘accessible’. The word was only just beginning to be used then, you weren’t writing for an academic organ you were writing for a daily newspaper, even though it was still a broadsheet and it was at the top of the tree, as they thought then. But yes, while your criticism had to be to the point and stringent and focussed, your vocabulary should probably be more accessible to the man in the street than that of your predecessors.” (p. 398)

[TS] ... from about 1987 onwards, or 1988, I think there was a more, I wouldn’t say aggressive, but a more circumspect, a more critical approach to what was being offered as expert criticism, and one of the requirements that was beginning to be imposed on criticism was the idea that it should be accessible, that it should not assume too much prior knowledge on the part of the reader, that it would need to explain itself much more. There had always been some Editors who didn’t like having any phrases in other foreign languages, that wanted everything to be made very clear and simple.” (pp. 502-503)

[MO] “(...do you have any sense of there ever being a decline in the quality of classical music writing?) Yes, if you’re talking about the quality of ideas and the complexity of what was being discussed, the variety of vocabulary... If you see a flower flourishing it’s got a lot of leaves, a lot of branches, a lot of delicate variation. If it’s a bit more stressed then the variety and delicacy is less, and that definitely happened, yes. (During the 1980s?) Yes... there was less appetite for a piece of journalism which was just there to talk about ideas. By the end of the 1980s you practically never saw an article just saying ‘oh, this new recording of something has stimulated me to think about that other composer there and how their styles were similar and, you know, this music movement took a particular turn then’ you know that sort of article was virtually extinct. So ‘think pieces’, there wasn’t really any room for them. So it was very much just kind of tactical, ‘there’s a concert, write 300 words about it, bang’. ...there’s this constant driving anxiety in the broadsheets that they’re steadily losing circulation and they don’t know quite where it will bottom out, and the response to that all through the period we’ve been talking about has been to try and get a younger and more general readership, and I think that’s produced some anomalies. For instance there was a shift away from wanting highly musically educated people to be writing music reviews, they

wanted somebody that wouldn't ever use a term that wasn't understood by the general reader, and the idea of that was that your reader kind of opens the paper and reads it all through and should be able to land anywhere and feel perfectly at home and comfortable. I mean I think that's just kind of hysteria really. I think the people that open music reviews and read them do it because they're interested in music and they quite like an informed opinion... But that was the sort of general hysterical view which has made most of the changes happen that I've talked about, you know, the stuff getting shorter, it was that they should all be absolutely intelligible to anyone and that specialist knowledge was a disadvantage rather than an advantage... but as far as the quality of ideas getting into print goes, there's been a struggle in certain areas, and largely on the basis that if it's too specialised no newspaper wants it, even if it's a subject that has followers who are quite specialised." (pp. 468-469)

[BN] "...obviously I was aware that I couldn't be too esoteric and technical. If I used technical terms I always tried to set them in a context where any reasonably intelligent person who didn't know what the technical term meant could have a pretty good guess from the context. I think one should do that always. In the early days this seemed to work, later on there was this sort of new spirit which has gradually crept into the media in general whereby you mustn't ever use a technical term because it might frighten off the readers or the listeners. The notion that they should be given the intelligence to work it out from the context has gone by the board I think now. I mean I point out (that if) I want to use an Italian term like *molto allegro* or something, that any musical person knows what this means and that if one doesn't know what something means one can always look it up and I point out that when I read a cricket report I haven't got a clue what a 'deep mid-off' is and all that nonsense. But I don't therefore say 'this is esoteric writing'. If I'm sufficiently interested I find out what these things mean. But no, no, no, you mustn't have that now, anything that might stop people reading." (p. 453)

[TS] "...I had always written on the assumption that I was writing for people who were interested in reading a review, and not necessarily for the general reader, and I think that this tendency to want to have stuff written for the general reader has been part of the dumbing down process. Because the idea is that arts coverage ought to be accessible to everybody, well of course that means it's not so useful to people who know something about it all. It's one of those problems, which bits of the paper are meant for who? If you don't assume a certain level of interest you may end up writing or carrying material that is incredibly banal. Obviously these are all compromises; ... (there was) that sense that newspapers, that the arts coverage needed to be more populist, less elitist and that a writer who was writing from a point of view of expertise, as I was, might err on the side of being too exclusive or assuming too much previous knowledge. (p. 502)

... we've been living through a period where the rich have got much richer and the poor have got much poorer, where the cultural trend has been towards that which everybody likes and

away from that which only a few like, and the coverage in newspapers has been defined by that process I think, because the newspapers in a sense have felt that they would be at risk if they didn't simply go along with this radical change and what you see is an economy of scale whereby the most successful can be reproduced and can become the taste of all and the least successful, the specialist, is something that is very much only of interest to a small number, a very low level of life, if you see what I mean." (p. 511)

For some journalists, the loss of the overnight concert review, the reduction of page space and evolution of multi-section newspapers during the 1980s were considered to have played leading roles in the degradation of broadsheet classical music criticism:

[PG] "My impression is that the first half of the period was pretty flat, it just went on unchanged at *The Times*. We were covering as many concerts, and at the same kind of length, and when I say concerts I include opera performances as well. But the pressure came on in the later 1980s and there were a number of factors. One is the fact that reviews were no longer overnight and the kind of justification for them being in newspapers was taken away and therefore it was so much easier to reduce the space, after all the only justification for a concert review is that it's news. This was always the argument, when things start to get tight, 'well what is the point of reviewing an oboe quartet?' or whatever it might be. Well the point of reviewing is saying 'this is an important event that's happened'. You might just as well say 'well what is the point of talking about a political event?' well it's news, it happened. Once it's no longer being treated as news then you've lost that argument, and concerts, opera and theatre they ceased to be treated as news by newspapers, and therefore they could be treated as kind of magazine elements like the cookery column or the travel pages." (p. 430)

[PG] "Well there's a great temptation for me to say that there was a decline, that is the way I feel, perhaps it's a personal feeling, I don't know. But the kind of writing one sees in the supposedly serious newspapers now to me it's a different level to fifteen years ago but certainly a different level to twenty years ago. I sense, well it's hard to know, if people are being put under pressure for space, anything for me under 300 words for a review becomes meaningless, because you can't develop an argument, and once you've commented the game's all over... because you can't be serious on a postage stamp. So it's pressure for space as much as anything and that started happening in the late 1980s. ... very shortly after Wapping it was difficult to keep the space going. It's also the people involved. When I started working on *The Times* my colleagues were, Bill Mann, Stanley Sadie, Joan Chissell, Max Harrison, Stephen Walsh, all of those people had some kind of credibility as scholars, all of those people wrote books. Bill Mann wrote on Mozart, Stanley Sadie was the Editor of Grove at that time, Max Harrison I think had a book on jazz, Chissell was an internationally recognised Schumann scholar, Stephen Walsh at that time had a book on Schumann. It's

very, very different now. Again, that's part of the way the world has changed. Musicology, like other academic disciplines, has got more professional now, and it's very difficult for musicologists to take newspaper criticism seriously, and they just don't." (pp. 428-429)

[FM] "There was always a pressure on space and I would say that by the end of the time I was at *The Independent* the squeeze was starting, and it wasn't anybody or any one single thing it was just a general movement towards other art forms taking priority, visual arts becoming very, very fashionable, which hadn't really happened before, ... leading up to the whole Charles Saatchi kind of explosion in the early to mid 1990s." (p. 443)

[TS] "In one sense the blog can be as long as it likes but the newspaper is a format which is finite, and newspaper pages have been getting smaller." (p. 511)

[CD] "...there was this trend towards multi-section newspapers, and that had a slightly odd effect; it's been good for journalists in some ways because there's more space to fill obviously and when you're freelance you have three phone calls coming in instead of one... The one problem is that, especially from a reader's point of view, they'll see an advert for an album and at the bottom of the advert it says 'First class, a masterpiece – *The Times*'... and 'Brilliant – *The Times*', and I think 'I didn't write about that album, I didn't say that', and I can't figure it out, it wasn't me who said it; and there's so many supplements now that it's much easier for publicists to get a good mention from somewhere on a national newspaper and I think it has devalued the currency because you'll find that this person who said 'it's a masterpiece' in *The Times* was in the Saturday listings section in a tiny box in one corner and it's not the main critic it's someone else. I can see why publicists do it, it makes sense from their point of view, but from a readers point of view it makes things even more confusing and that began to develop in that period I would say." (p. 383)

One interviewee evoked an Adornian perspective in condemning the increased dominance of popular music (see Appendix DDD) and argued that the 'dumbing down' process is evidenced by the decreased seriousness which classical music critics and their editors now apply to the discipline:

[BN] "I think the only Fleet Street, I say 'Fleet Street' in inverted commas of course now, the only Editor who still takes an interest in classical music is the man on *The Guardian*... I've got to be careful not to libellous here, but on the whole one doesn't find it in the higher (positions), some of them might go to the opera but one suspects it is for social reasons because opera is supposed to be sexy and they've all heard of Pavarotti, but that's as far as it goes... (p. 448)

...we're dealing with a profession which is very small and there are a number of disparate individuals with their different strengths and weaknesses and so on and their different degrees of commitment I would say. What I would say, for example, is that when I started to

write, which is the late 1960s, early 1970s, and I was reviewing a lot of new music, you would go to the run through of a new work, a festival or new BBC commission of an orchestral piece by a young composer, and there in the stalls you would see Peter Heyworth, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, perhaps Martin Cooper from *The Telegraph* or Peter Stadlen from *The Telegraph*, various other critics from the newspapers, all of whom would have taken the trouble to phone up the publishers and get a copy of the score, doing their homework. Today, none of them would lift a foot to do that anymore so that whether this says something about the waning commitment to new music or whether it says something more general about how seriously critics approach their jobs I wouldn't like to say. I think that there is a slight waning of commitment but I think partly it's because the people involved, like myself, are seriously depressed by the conditions under which we increasingly have to work, i.e. less and less space and the general sense that nobody gives a damn for what we do anymore on the papers, higher up... One goes on doing it because one believes in the art form and one would like to share ones perceptions with other people who do too." (p. 463)

5.2.7 The political climate and Thatcherism

Interviewees were asked whether they considered the political climate under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to have been a crucial factor in bringing about changes either to their work or the environment in which they operated:

[MO] "There certainly seemed to be less going on through the Thatcher years, less and less. Less to write about, reviews were encouraged to be shorter as well. There was absolutely no embarrassment about taking up a big chunk of an arts page for an advertisement, whereas there might have been at least some slight coyness about doing it before the Thatcher years. It just generally got a bit more hard-nosed. (You said that reviews were encouraged to be shorter and shorter. Did you get a feeling for what was driving that?) Well, partly just space, partly trying to maximise advertising space. Partly a sort of reaction, and not entirely unjustified, against people pontificating and sort of thinking what they had to say was frightfully important. That wasn't altogether unhealthy because before that people who ponced on about music were rather a protected species, they could really say an incredible number of silly things and regard themselves as rather important in the scheme of things. That kind of went when financial measures started to dictate how everyone saw things. It was very much in the forefront of people's minds that what you were talking about was a minority interest and you were talking about it in a very minority way; I mean you were a minority within a minority. The idea that the validity of an art form bore some relation to how many people liked it was a fairly new idea. That was definitely a Thatcherite idea, which has its bad and good sides... You know when you start saying 'let the market decide' then obviously all kinds of things happen." (p. 468)

[BN] “Thatcher had this notion that there should be less public subsidy because in a successful economy private business would support the arts which of course didn’t on the whole prove to be true. The only arts they supported were the very obvious arts, I mean you get endless businessmen subscribing to a Pavarotti beano but you’re not going to get them supporting some avant-garde series at The Warehouse or something like that so that didn’t really work, it was tried for a time.” (p. 457)

[PG] “There was a big increase in commercial funding and commercial sponsorship. That was the government’s policy, to try and push the funding into the private sector and the private sector did respond. There was a kind of unwritten rule, I don’t remember where it came from, a kind of rule that you had to mention if it had been sponsored by Tesco, it never was sponsored by Tesco then, but you had to say somewhere in the piece ‘this concert was sponsored by Tesco’. It was never very easy to do that in a natural way, it always stuck out like a sore thumb, but we kind of had to go along with that... The idea was that everybody benefited because the arts organisations got the money and it was a publicity exercise for the sponsor. You can probably find examples of that. But it was strange commercial thing.” (p. 429)

[TS] “There was a thing called The Glory of the Garden which was a report on the live performing arts, or on what the Arts Council was doing, by William Rees-Mogg, Lord Mogg, one of the baddies I think of British journalism and of British life, but anyway. Mrs Thatcher initially faced a world where all the great media physicians and all the people who were going to be doing anything to do with culture were certainly opposed to her. She was much hated by everybody. I mean I was one of the very few journalists who both voted conservative three times for Mrs Thatcher and also wrote in *The Spectator* ... when Mrs Thatcher came in I became known as a journalist on *The Guardian* who was sympathetic to what she was trying to do. But... I wasn’t sympathetic to all aspects of her cultural anxieties...

I remember in something like 1983 or 1984 that the London Symphony Orchestra ceased to play on the South Bank. Previously we’d been reviewing concerts as a matter of course on the South Bank... and if not there, there were concerts at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Purcell Room and they were all classical music, all of them. There was never a pop music concert of the South Bank. The new halls had been opened in 1967, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Purcell Room and the Heyward Gallery and they were part of a completely different tradition so you didn’t find Indian classical musicians playing there. You didn’t find much in the way of jazz, or anything like that, jazz was at Ronnie Scott’s Club. So there was a huge amount of classical music provided and don’t forget that in the days of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone’s council subsidised the English National Opera at the Coliseum, it subsidised all the music on the South Bank and therefore there was no question about the fact that there was money put forward for people to put on small scale concerts there... Mrs

Thatcher came in and privatised certain things, put pressure on others... the ending of the GLC and Mrs Thatcher's abolition of Ken Livingstone as it were, had huge cultural consequences for London, huge cultural consequences...

But nobody was at the Arts Council saying 'why are you giving money to these unknown people who aren't very good?' There was no tradition of backing success, of wanting to make people pay the maximum that could be paid. Mrs Thatcher's policy at The Arts Council after The Glory of The Garden was that users should pay... what happened at the ENO was that, under Peter Jonas, gradually instead of being given increases in grant they were being encouraged to see how high they could raise the ticket prices to fund themselves which inevitably had a consequence that opera became more elitist. Instead of the price being right for anybody to go to, you got a situation where you had to be rich to go to these things... the accusation that these things were elitist was self-generating because if the prices went up of course they were more elitist...

The Arts Council is not there to make more culture happen now, it's there to try and channel the minimum support for the maximum consequence, and it's now also giving an enormous amount of money to ethnic things. If we're talking up to the mid 1980s there was practically no Arts Council money devoted to any ethnic arts..., but really the need is to nurture the audience; the way to nurture the audience is low ticket prices and convenience of access, and also range of program and marketing. But in order to do that you need to have subsidy being fed in from the local authorities and from The Arts Council and you need many more concert halls dotted around the place. So the centralisation meant that this citadel of culture was very easy to knock down, and Mrs Thatcher knocked it down effectively and changed it.

... and it was also the city, which had always been a great source of funding, Peter Stuyvesant supported the LSO for years, the cigarette manufacturer, but once the Barbican came in there was subsidy from the city directly, because the city felt it should raise its flag as being culturally significant... So the competition (was) between that hall, the South Bank and the Albert Hall, which was the big summer festival done by the BBC... and then the BBC began to reduce the number of orchestras which it supported too. The Arts Council took over the responsibility for regional orchestras so the plural sources of funding for the classical traditions were reducing... and this was very much a consequence in the mid 1980s, of the change in politics." (pp. 506-508)

One interviewee laid considerable blame not on the increased focus on the popular consumerism which arose during the Thatcherite era but on Western democracy per se:

[BN] "Well if you want the full works you're going to get my theory of late capitalism which I'm afraid will take a very long time to expound. I think it's to do with pressures. The point about the mass market, which is supposed to produce wonderful ranges of choice and all the rest of it, and competition, actually works in exactly the opposite way in my opinion and it's deeply coercive and conformist and the choices offered are a very, very narrow lot of choices

within very carefully controlled limits, and I could illustrate this very well from pop music actually, but that may come later. The point is by now it's clear that newspapers are in a sort of last ditch situation. In a way when you think about it, it is astonishing that as a sort of institution they've survived as long as they have when you see the access to news and other media, and now online and goodness knows what... I don't think people read them anymore, apart from other media people, apart from political people. I mean one has to be careful here because I think the best standards for example in foreign reporting and political commentary are as high as they've ever been on certain papers and I would include *The Independent* there. But I think outside those areas they're really more sort of entertainment or advertising magazines... (Would you root any of this change in the 1980s?) I think some of these things have been going on for a very long time and they are inevitable given the increasingly corporate society we live in. You see I think we no longer live in a democracy in the old sense, I think we live in what I call a consumocracy in which governments, along with politicians, along with everybody else, have to sell themselves like products and we see the effect of this every day. Now a consumocracy offers certain goods which you buy, which you fall for, you know. The notion of democracy is that the majority may want some things, but democracy is meant to take into account all the other modes of dissent equally. Whereas consumocracy, the mass product drives out everything else. I think that this process has happened in America, it's happened particularly in this country, I don't think it has yet happened on the Continent. If you look at German newspapers and so on you will find that classical music coverage is much more extensive there and they really still have a very different culture, I mean most sizeable towns in Germany still support an opera house in a way that's inconceivable here, it's a different thing. But certainly in this country this sort of corporately controlled and I think and implicitly coercive and oppressive consumocracy has taken quite a hold." (pp. 453-454)

5.2.8 Music advertising

For many interviewees the effects of increased commercialisation, whether attributable to the Thatcher government or otherwise, sparked changes in the relationship between their writing and music promotion in the broadsheet press, for example:

[RS] "I did become more aware that I was essentially part of the marketing (process). The press had become, it always was, part of the marketing push on specific products. You were always aware of the fact that whenever anyone was being offered up for interview there was a reason, they weren't just doing it because they wanted to explain something about the way they were thinking about music, it was because they had something to flog... It became more intense and it's become increasingly intense, as a result of more and more coverage. You see one important change that's happened, another sort of slow train coming as it were over the period you are talking about and also beyond, was that as more and more coverage became available the power relationship between the PR's and the writers changed. You see when I

was writing towards the end of the period I was the power person because... if I decided I was going to interview so and so for the *Sunday Times* well that was a big deal for the PRs because there still weren't that many outlets and certainly not outlets with the circulation of the *Sunday Times*, and I was the only person doing it. Now, every one of the broadsheets has got entire sections given over to music so the PRs are the ones who can choose, so 'hmm, shall we go for the front of *The Telegraph* magazine or the front of *G2*?'. So they have this range of options available for their larger artists which just weren't available back then. Was I aware of a change in marketing? Only that marketing... very often became the focus of the piece..., so you felt very often that you were writing less about the intrinsic qualities of the music and more about where it was being punted." (p. 476)

[RS] "No disrespect to the PR department. But you can't write to their agenda because that would be a disaster." (p. 472)

[DG] "... certainly advertising started to squeeze out everything so if you had a limited amount of space and somebody took a half page advert, out went that weeks work." (p. 414)

[HF] "I would say the consciousness of ads pushing (copy) off the page didn't affect me or impact upon me until the late 1990s. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I wasn't aware of it. I wasn't aware of Subs ringing me up and saying 'I'm terribly sorry you've got half the number of words tonight because we've got an ad', not at all in that period, no...

The only thing that could have had been thought to have a tangential effect was all this sudden big business being involved in classical music and sponsorship and you know the era of PR and marketing, it was the great decade of PR and marketing. I don't think critics of the previous generation had anything to do with PR people and marketing... there would be no Press Officer and Publicity Officer and marketing machine. The fact that that was born in the 1980s and was very aggressive in the 1980s made critics talk amongst themselves about the ethics of how, if at all, we were being influenced by those people. Now there was a lot of soul searching because there seemed to be infinite budgets for PR people to take you out for lunch. It was the great era of lunches, you could be invited out for a lunch that lasted from 1pm 'till 4pm and cost £200 and any company, orchestra record company would be delighted to do that to get you on their side. There was quite a lot of soul searching, 'oh yes, you had lunch with the PR officer of EMI did you?' and people would be watching to see if you were giving better reviews to a record by EMI. Critics were watching each other and bitching about each other I think quite a bit about that and you had to square it with your own conscience. Well, is the fact that you've had a long time talking to the PR officer of the LPO having a lovely dinner and getting a free trip, are you going to write more positively about their next concert? ... I think I can honestly say I didn't... and I wouldn't dream of casting stones on any other critics. All I can say is that was in the air and we were all very aware of it. There would be quite a lot of bitching amongst each other about who might have been

wined and dined by a certain PR Officer, so that is an important ingredient in the 1980s.” (pp. 403-404)

5.2.9 Employment conditions

The second key area explored during the interviews (Part B) concerned participants’ employment experiences as broadsheet music journalists between 1981 and 1991, with particular focus upon their recruitment, means of reward, training and development and the nature of their ‘employee’ relations with the broadsheets they contributed to, as presented below in sections 5.2.9 a – d respectively. In order to maintain confidentiality, and in line with the conditions outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix O), the following quotations are not assigned to named participants but instead to anonymous references ([Anon. 1] etc) which correspond with Part B of the interview transcriptions found at Appendices NN to ZZ; however, any material quoted below which emerged during Part A of the interviews, for example during discussions concerning the participant’s career history as opposed to their personal employment terms and conditions, is assigned to named interviewees.

a) Recruitment

Interviewees were asked to describe both the circumstances under which they secured their broadsheet positions, either as staff or freelance music writers, and any qualifications or experience required of them upon entering the broadsheet arena. The rock, pop and jazz critics depicted similarly informal experiences:

[Anon. 13] “I met Michael Church at a party and I told him about (previous freelance work) and he said ‘oh, alright’, and that’s how it went, you know. But *The Observer*, I got a phone call from John Lucas, who was the Arts Editor in those days, and he said ‘I’ve seen a piece that you wrote for the *New Statesman*...how would you feel about writing some occasional pieces for *The Observer* about pop music?’ ...The upshot of it was that he and Terence Kilmartin and I went out to lunch and at the end of it I had agreed to write some pieces for *The Observer* and that’s really it. It was never really formalised ... All these things happen like that. I have never met anybody who has applied for a job.” (p. 561)

[Anon. 1] “The guy, John, I forget what his name was. I think he phoned me up and said he was looking for some jazz pieces and he’d heard about me and was I interested in doing things? It was as simple as that really... I remember I had lunch with him some time after that and we talked about what I might do... It’s funny, it can be a really laissez-faire thing, it can just be a matter of sheer luck how you get into these positions... the trouble is, this is what drives me mad in a sense, I see people who’ve obviously lucked into these positions and I think well actually, it’s only because technically you’re OK, but actually you’re talking a load of bollocks; I know that, but your Editor probably doesn’t... That’s what happens. Which may equally be true in other areas of arts journalism. I mean you could put yourself

up as a great writer on ballet but actually know bugger all about it, but if it sounds as if you know what you're talking about. There's also an aspect of how professional you are. If you're very bad about turning in copy on time and you're all over the place then Editors are going to get pretty tired of that very quickly. But if you're very efficient about getting copy in and it doesn't need a lot of work then they like you because it saves them time." (p. 512)

[Anon. 11] "I started writing for the *Sunday Times*, but on a very casual basis, they would only print an article a month... and that was after I got back in touch with Mick Brown who... had me as his kind of understudy. (So you wrote this review on the book on John Lennon, they needed a rock critic and they basically picked up the phone and gave you a call?) Well I'd already been writing for them for some time at that point. That review would have run in about 1987/ 1988, or whenever the book came out. I'd been writing for them regularly but not every week. After I was made rock critic then the presumption was that I would have an article more or less every week. But the relationship had been in place for a year or so when that happened. (Did you approach them with the book review?) Yes I'd always fancied doing book reviews because I'd studied English at University (It was Oxford wasn't it?) Yes. (So that's how you got spotted?) Yes. I mean 'spotted' is not quite how it was really. It was a matter of, as I say, Mick Brown wanted somebody to understudy for him. He'd met me; he liked one of the things I'd written for the *Telegraph*. It was very casual and it built up over a period of eighteen months until whenever it was they decided I was going to be the rock critic and that was that. (So I don't need to ask you about interviews and selection tests?) No, no, no there was none of that. Although funnily enough, I think one of the things that made me attractive to them, to the Editor, was the fact that I had a bit of history in radio and I'd done music for various dramas that had been performed on Radio 3...this could be completely wrong, but the impression I got was that made me a slightly more welcome figure than I might otherwise have been, because newspapers always like to feel that you've got 'ins' in other worlds that they can sort of tap into, bringing some useful contacts with you never goes amiss you know." (p. 551)

[Anon. 2] "It was through Richard Williams needing someone to deputise for him. I was actually supposed to be doing just the listings and an occasional concert, that was the original plan, but after about two or four weeks he was promoted I think to a much more demanding role... I had met him at a concert when I was at *The London Daily News* and I was very aware of his work because when I was a sixth former I was reading Richard Williams, I really admired his work, and I was at a concert with the *London Daily News* and I saw a man who I took to be Richard Williams... and I struck up a conversation and it was him. So we just met the once. What happened after that did he contact me or did I contact him? I can't remember, I honestly can't remember what happened, maybe I dropped him a line. (So a chance meeting? So he didn't then interview you or say 'bring us along a portfolio of your writing'?) No, we had lunch. He told me what he wanted over lunch (... did they say 'just

do the odd one or two (articles) and we'll see if it works... or were you just kind of on-board from the off?) I was just on board. Yes, it sounds weird now looking back" (p. 517)

Again, subtle differences emerged according to genre with many classical music critics describing a slightly different pattern of events:

[NK] "I started writing freelance music criticism in about 1976, while I was doing some work for the BBC as well, and that was mainly for *The Financial Times* first and then I did odd bits for *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, one or two others. But then in 1979 I went to New York and wrote for *The New Yorker* for three years with Andrew Porter which was fantastic, and while I was there I suppose I was writing the odd article for English papers but really nothing very much. So then I came back in 1982 and had a contract with *The Times* at that point, I was also Music Editor of *The Listener* and edited *Early Music*, which is an OUP (Oxford University Press) journal, and I think that I was at *The Times* from 1982 to 1986 and then moved to *The Observer*. I was first the number two on *The Observer* with Peter Heyworth, and then following his retirement I took over as the Chief Music Critic and that only stopped when I got the job at Radio 3 in 1992." (p. 431)

[Anon. 7] "When I joined *The Times* there were two or three staff music critics but when Stanley Sadie retired they did not want to put a new person on the staff. So they basically offered me a freelance contract for a significant number of pieces a year ... I had a contract with *The Times* to write this number of pieces, an arrangement with *The Listener* to do a day a week as their Music Editor and then the following year a contract with OUP to edit *Early Music*. So basically I had those three contracts but I was completely free to do them whenever I wanted as it were so that was quite a boom time really. ... So when I moved to *The Observer* I wanted to keep that situation. I can't remember whether they offered me an employee job or not, but it didn't really arise because the advantages of being self-employed then were really quite considerable from the tax point of view so that was what I did, I just moved to an equivalent arrangement with *The Observer* with an understanding that I would write X pieces per year. Of course you were writing far less for *The Observer* because you were writing 1200 words once a week rather than... But I wrote record reviews and features as well so it all added up. (So annual freelance contracts?) Yes." (p. 537)

[TS] "I joined *The Guardian* on April 13th 1973... from editing a music magazine called *Music and Musicians*, which I'd edited since the December edition of 1970. I started writing for *The Guardian* in 1972 when I went to New York for the purposes of my magazine, but I had the opportunity to attend the gala with which Rudolph Bing left the Met... and I wrote a review of it for *The Guardian*. It was the first time I dictated any copy to *The Guardian* over the transatlantic telephone, and it was quite an effort, and it was published and they liked it. So that enabled me to have a relationship with the Arts Editor of *The Guardian* whose name

was Michael McNeigh... the whole point of going to *The Guardian* was that it was a staff position which had a degree of security attached... What made it harder for me to be hired was the fact that I had no previous newspaper experience, which was certainly a disadvantage. But then it meant that I went into what's called the Features Department, which is where all the comment pages and the features, the women's pages and the arts page and various other things were edited. For the first six months that I was on *The Guardian* I did nothing but sub edit the arts pages... I was called a Sub Editor in the Features Department and I remained technically a Sub Editor throughout the 23 years I was there. Although I became the de facto opera critic for quite a long period, and I wrote features. Sub Editors who joined the Features Department were given a day each week, when I joined it in 1973, which was called a writing day; we were encouraged to go off and write features, do various things and that was thought to be desirable and a lot of us who joined at that point did in fact become writers and get jobs, sometimes in other newspapers." (p. 494)

[Anon. 10] "(The Chief Music Critic) got in touch with me... every now and again they'd start running out of people and they would ask themselves who's around, and I was a good candidate because I'd been mainly with the children and just writing stuff for magazines and so I was known to be there and semi-dormant, so they kind of activated me... I think it was all on personal judgement actually. I mean I did have a music degree and did have years of experience writing music criticism and... (the Chief Music Critic) knew that and he wouldn't have got in touch with me otherwise. But Editors don't really mind so much about this degree business or whether you've studied music, they're much more interested in if you've got flair as a writer, or what they'd regard as flair as a writer." (p. 548)

Interestingly, some interviewees also commented upon the various career motivations and backgrounds of newspaper music critics highlighting in certain respects the essentially amateurish nature of the job in the UK (see Appendix EEE), and one female critic described her sense of alienation upon entering what was essentially a male-dominated profession (see Appendix FFF). In terms of academic backgrounds, it transpired that eight of the interviewees were Oxbridge educated (see Appendix GGG), a point which one interviewee had also observed:

[Anon. 2] "I mean that's a problem with journalism generally. The informality is very good, I shouldn't complain, because I got through that way. But that's why journalism is so cliquey because there's no set procedure for entrance into the industry... it's 'who you know'... It's dreadful... I'm always shocked when I look at national newspapers and scan the bylines, how many sons and daughters of journalists are employed in the business... I went to Oxford. I went to St Catherine's at Oxford... I'm always amazed how big a role that plays, it's incredible... they (Editors) assume that there's a particular type of intelligence that goes with being from Oxbridge which I don't think is true at all. But they like to pigeonhole people. So you've got the kind of Oxford network and then the informality ...

Upon completion of the interviews, only one journalist had reported experiencing a formal selection process upon entry to the broadsheet journalism profession:

[Anon. 4] "...my job on *The Times Educational Supplement*, which was my very first journalistic job, that was by responding to an advert. It was advertised in *The Times Literary Supplement* and they said 'Sub Editor required for books and arts pages of *Times Educational Supplement*'... Well I'd done a degree in English and music so in a way it sort of matched. But I'd had no professional training. I really did train on the job... I'd (also) written a postgraduate thesis so they could see that I could edit and write, that was about 70,000 words... I had two interviews and I think at the second one I was given sort of tests. I was given unclean copy and of course I didn't know what the professional markings were so I thought 'well this is going to do for me because they're going to discover that I don't know what to put in the margin', but I just pencilled on what I would change in the copy and that was apparently good and he could see that I could edit copy straight away. But it was a long two interviews on all my thoughts and interests."

b) Reward

In terms of the financial rewards provided by the broadsheets between 1981 and 1991, once again similarities emerged according to genre specialism, with the rock and pop critics reporting very little financial security:

[Anon. 12] "(So there was no security?) No never had the slightest. Some people in my position do negotiate contracts...and some of these contracts are quite exclusive, you can't write for other people if you take the contract. Some of them are a bit demanding, they might want you to write three pieces a week come hell or high water, and maybe they'll publish them and maybe they don't. (So complete artistic freedom, you're your own boss?) Or totally insecurity, it depends how you want to look at it really... with a contract they're going to pay you whether they run it or not... so if you're not on a contract and they don't commission things they don't have to pay then. If you're on a contract you can send things in and they might not publish them. You get a much better strike rate as a freelance because they're going to have to pay for that precise piece of work so it's more in their interests to make sure it does go out... It's a very sort of ducking and diving kind of life to be honest, or it was. (So was there a fixed pay scale, for example a fixed rate for a 500 word article irrespective of whether you are writing for classical music or jazz or rock or pop?) Yes, I think it's a word rate, I mean some star writers maybe got more, I don't know. Mostly it's, whatever it is for 1000 words, and a review as I say when I started was something like £30... (So no long terms rewards like pensions?) It's frightening Jennifer I tell you, there's nothing."

commission things they don't have to pay then. If you're on a contract you can send things in and they might not publish them. You get a much better strike rate as a freelance because they're going to have to pay for that precise piece of work so it's more in their interests to make sure it does go out... It's a very sort of ducking and diving kind of life to be honest, or it was. (So was there a fixed pay scale, for example a fixed rate for a 500 word article irrespective of whether you are writing for classical music or jazz or rock or pop?) Yes, I think it's a word rate, I mean some star writers maybe got more, I don't know. Mostly it's, whatever it is for 1000 words, and a review as I say when I started was something like £30... (So no long terms rewards like pensions?) It's frightening Jennifer I tell you, there's nothing." (pp. 555-556)

[Anon. 13] "(...did music journalists receive similar remuneration packages irrespective of genre?) The very grand classical journalist, Edward Greenfield, I've got a feeling that people like that would probably have had some sort of contract. They probably had some sort of perks but I wouldn't know... They would have gone to Milan and the Metropolitan Opera... I went and did a thing from Nashville and I went to Oklahoma, the Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Which doesn't sound like a lot but it was fantastic." (p. 563)

[Anon. 11] "(So was pay based on the number of words that you produced or was it by the type of article?) No, it was extremely informal, rather annoyingly so. It was based on my Editor's calculation of how much work I'd done. It never seemed to relate particularly closely to wordage... It was very weird. (I wondered if there was a fixed rate for say a 500 word article?) I think there was but I don't think I got it. In fact I know that I wasn't treated very well in that regard. The *Sunday Times* in those days would pay their star writers and the people they took seriously quite big money, and they never did particularly with me. I mean I managed to ratchet my contract up successfully by various negotiating manoeuvres, but it was never especially well paid. But the great thing about the *Sunday Times* was that it got you noticed... I used the *Sunday Times* to force my way into radio and of course radio liked the fact that I wrote for the *Sunday Times*, so it was a mutual thing, and almost as soon as I started writing regularly for the *Sunday Times* I started contributing to these Radio 4 arts programmes... So the *Sunday Times* was hugely useful to me in that respect. (So there wouldn't for example be a higher rate of pay for a preview than a review?) No it didn't work like that, I could never figure out how it was done. It was all done ... on the back of an envelope basis. All I was aware of was the theatre guys got better paid than I did, because I knew one of them... But equally I was aware of the fact that I was getting much better paid, especially for things like book reviews, than people writing for just about every other newspaper or magazine... Q paid £100 per 1000 words when they started, which meant that if you wrote one of their 100 word reviews you got paid ten pounds and that was pretty much the going rate. Now the *Sunday Times* paid many times over that, I suppose they must have paid me about £200 or £300 per 1000. £250 per 1000 I think was what the *Sunday Times*

roughly paid, £250-£300, which was more or less three times what you got for writing for *Q*. ... You tended to be paid on what you were commissioned to write. They very often cut things, so I remember for example that I wrote a big piece on country music which was commissioned I think at 1500 words, well they ended up running about two thirds of it, but I still remember getting paid £400 for that. (Did ...music journalists covering classical or jazz (attract the same pay?)) Well I think they got paid more than I did, I'm almost certain they did. I don't know how much they would have got paid. I bet David Cairns was on a better whack than I was, I'm sure he was... Yes, in the arts hierarchy pop, especially in the *Sunday Times*, was very much at the bottom." (p. 552)

[Anon. 13] "If you were commissioned to write something and it doesn't appear for reasons which are beyond your control, if it's terribly duff and just no good and they don't want it then that's a different story, but if it doesn't appear, although they definitely commissioned it, you would get what's called a 'kill fee' which is usually a third, or possibly a half, of the original of what you would have otherwise got... if you're a freelance you get paid for what's called lineage, paid by the amount that they use. Nowadays they're much, much closer to knowing what they want, so they'll say 500 words and they mean 500 words. But otherwise people used to write a little bit over the top just in case. My friend Max Jones who was the longest serving member of the *Melody Maker* staff said 'always put a bit in there for the subs to take out dear boy, that's what you do'." (pp. 562-563)

[Anon. 2] "(... would *The* (newspaper title) back in 1987/88 to 1991 ... refund all of your expenses?) No, no. So what you would do is you would arrange to do the interview for *The* (newspaper title)... and you'd also contact a small music magazine and say 'I've got this chance of an interview with X, would you like a piece?', and if they say 'yes' then you go on the trip and supply the small magazine with a small piece but the main piece is for *The* (newspaper title) and that somehow satisfies their conscience." (p. 520)

In contrast, the classical music journalists who participated in this study described a greater sense of job security (one interviewee also described the contracts which applied to several other broadsheet music journalists (see Appendix HHH)):

[Anon. 10] "(... did music journalists at *The Independent* receive similar remuneration irrespective of genre?) ...I guess it would be more to do with the sort of status of the journalist, which is funny considering that *The Independent* didn't want to have people with big followings. But then that's precisely why they didn't want to have people with big followings because those people could then bargain for more money, so they thought 'keep them all down' and in fact there were instances where people got a bit too famous and asked for more and then just were dropped. But I wouldn't know, I suspect that people writing about rock got more but I don't know." (p. 549)

[Anon. 4] "...it was a monthly retainer, it was paid monthly, it still is, and in fact it hasn't been increased a penny since 1996." (p. 528)

[Anon. 9] "... not many of my colleagues are lucky enough even to have a retainer, they're paid per concert. Now how they set the fee for a single review I've no idea. All I can say is it hasn't gone up much, if at all... there was never a sort of set annual increment, it was at the Editor's discretion... I've never enquired or known what my colleagues, even within *The Times*, even my music critic colleagues in *The Times*, what their arrangements were because there is a different arrangement for every single person...(p. 544) I suppose the fact that my retainer is on a yearly basis... you could argue two ways; it either keeps you on the ball, which is I think their idea, or when things are not going as well it could have a negative affect on your morale because you might think 'I might be gone in a year'. You are kept in a state of, I would say, suspended insecurity." (p. 546)

...I was given a retainer, which nowadays I think is quite rare, but because they wanted to get me from a full time salaried job they really had to offer me a retainer to make me feel some sense of security. That retainer was about half my current salary then... Now the understanding of that retainer was that I could write for anything else but not another newspaper... But I could write for magazines and I could broadcast." (p. 547)

[Anon. 10] "They arranged your tickets of course, not travel tickets but I mean concert tickets. You never had to worry about ringing people up and saying I want tickets for something." (p. 550)

Some interviewees had also observed various changes in the nature of financial reward across the music journalism profession since the 1980s:

[Anon. 10] "...it was a fixed amount, for a feature or for a review. But they did tell you how many words should be in it and you couldn't deviate from that very much or you'd be in trouble. They wouldn't come back to a person who kept over writing for instance. You'd be in the shit if you kept doing that; and in fact that's something that changed in those years really because there was much more a sort of sense that music journalists were a protected species if you go back to the 1970s, and there were lots who wrote things in illegible long hand and the people at the newspaper had to decipher it or they'd write far too much and somebody would edit it. There was much more latitude to give work to the Sub Editors, it didn't matter how much work the Subs had. Whereas as everything got under more financial pressure, or people interpreted the financial pressures differently, making Subs have to do extra work was no longer popular or even accepted by the end of the 1980s, no matter who you were really." (p. 548)

[Anon. 5] “We used to have staff critics but in the course of the 1980s the number of staff critics went into serious decline and I think you’ll find that now there are practically no critics anywhere in Fleet Street who are on staff. The change of course has been one of the things that has made criticism much more vulnerable... Having staff critics means that you’ve got them on stand by, it’s like having a company of actors, so it’s obviously more expensive but it produces better results because they take a serious interest in the overall spread. They feed into the ideas of the arts page, they feed into the Editor. They’re not just out pitching for a chance to earn money, they are exercising a responsibility.” (p. 530)

In terms of non-financial reward, journalists were asked whether they ever received any feedback on their work:

[Anon. 12] “In the 1980s I never got any feedback at all from Editorial. I mean occasionally someone would have a little word of encouragement but only ever ‘en passant’... I think part of it is just the sheer speed and the busyness of it all, there’s no sentimentality about it... you’re just expected to get on with it and if it’s going in the paper it’s good enough, and if it isn’t it’s not good enough, and that’s pretty much the extent of the feedback you get. So it’s quite brutal in that sense, and they know there’s any number of other people who’ll do it if you’re not happy, and you know that too... But I’ve seen five or six Editors at *The Times* come and go, let alone Arts Editors, so you get a little bit immune to it after while. Peter Stoddard, one of the Editors in the 1980s, was the only Editor who actually invited me to go into his office and have a talk with him for a while, and that was about an article I’d written about Radiohead. He said ‘we must have a talk, come on in and bring me some records you’re listening to’, and I went to his office and just sat there for about 40 minutes, it was surreal actually, we just talked about, I don’t know, I can’t even remember, he liked Madonna, he liked Radiohead and his daughter liked something else and son liked something else, and that’s the only Editor I’ve had a kind of formal meeting with.” (pp. 558-559)

[Anon. 7] “John Higgins on *The Times* was a very sort of imperious Editor and he’d occasionally say ‘I didn’t think that worked very well did it’, using my efforts to make some joke about something, or he’d say ‘right on the nail’, that would usually be something he’d been to and agreed with you about. But it wasn’t what one could call real feedback. The Editor of *The Observer* once said to me ‘I love your openings’ because I think he’d never read past the first sentence of anything I’d written. So you certainly didn’t expect feedback from ultimate Editors, you got a bit of feedback from Arts Editors and that was about it. But no, that was the usual thing in those days, if people didn’t like what you were doing you soon got to know about it because they didn’t ask you to do more, there wasn’t a sense of feedback being really important.” (p. 538)

[Anon. 9] “John Higgins did give me feedback occasionally, he would give advice...you know, ‘try and be a bit more precise, one adjective instead of three’ and he would do that very infrequently and it would be very much to the point and it would be courteously done. But very little and certainly no ongoing feeling of whether I was doing the job well or not. Just occasionally, something like once a year, he would send a little memo as they were in those days, no email, praising you, just perhaps once every two years it would come like a bolt out of the blue.” (p. 545)

[CD] “...they’re now much more Editor driven (regarding) the content, not that I have much contact with my new Editor, and I know (a colleague) had this experience, but if I have a good idea I send them an email and I’m probably not going to hear back from them, they just don’t reply, so that means ‘no’. If they want something they contact you. Which is not a very satisfactory way of working.” (p. 382)

[Anon. 10] “If you found that somebody was editing your copy a lot more, that could mean that you were doing it wrong or it could mean that you’d got a mad Sub Editor, and both things were equally likely actually so you never really knew, and sometimes mad Sub Editors didn’t last very long because everybody agreed they were mad and in fact you always had the option of phoning up and saying my copy was completely murdered by the Sub” (p. 549)

[Anon. 11] “(...did you get any feedback from the Editors, or even the readers?) Hardly any. Readers occasionally wrote in to complain about something, but not really. They’d sometimes say they liked something, but not really. That’s one of the reasons I like working in radio, because you have a much warmer relationship and a more active relationship with your listeners than you do with your readers, and readers when they get in touch are normally getting in touch to complain, whereas listeners are usually getting in touch to say how they like something. It’s a curious fact of life. (... Editors, you didn’t get any feedback from (them)?) Not really. Nothing of any consequence.” (p. 553)

c) Training and development

When asked to describe the extent of any professional training or development made available to them by the broadsheet publications they contributed to, all participants provided unanimously negative responses, for example:

[Anon. 1] “You were completely self-sufficient. In a sense it was up to you. If you were going to be the (newspaper title) spokesperson for jazz you had to make sure you were up to speed with everything that was going on, it was up to you to do it to hold on to your position. In the end they were the beneficiary of all that, they got the benefit of your wisdom, which they would then pass on to their readers and charge them money for it. Other than that there would’ve been absolutely nothing that they would have done to help you.” (p. 514)

[Anon. 12] “Absolutely no training, no qualifications, no transferable skills whatsoever. I mean, it’s completely busking it, winging it or whatever you want to call it, from start to finish... as far as the newspapers were concerned, they just wanted to see the finished thing and they couldn’t care less about anything else, very wild west really... It’s just a voracious machine, it just wants the words with as little fuss and bother as possible.” (pp. 556-557)

d) Employee relations

Finally, interviewees were asked to describe the nature of employee relations with their respective broadsheets, including the extent to which they were involved in decision-making processes associated with the arts page content:

[Anon. 12] “No. Those decisions are always totally handed down from the Editorial people and I think they don’t even let the big name writers know too much about those kinds of things. I think it’s a territorial thing, or a proprietorial thing, you know, we write, they edit and there’s a big resistance to the idea of encouraging writers to think that they can be Editors or be involved in the editing process... Maybe informally, maybe some of the bigger names that are in the office more, but certainly none of the freelance people that are out and about like me. We would never be consulted. It’s only once in a blue moon that we ever have any meetings of any sort.” (p. 559)

[Anon. 9] “No we never all met together. Though I think *The Financial Times* did that, they had a monthly meeting. But we never saw each other unless we chose to meet socially. At the very beginning when we took in our copy at night of course we’d see each other slaving away at the desk but there wasn’t a second to speak because we were all writing to deadline. But as soon as we stopped going in, as soon as we did it by email, we’d never ever see each other unless we’d make an arrangement to do so.... I should think we were probably always the most undemocratic in that way, you know the critics did what they were told really. It never worried me. I once did suggest to Paul Griffiths that we might meet and discuss things and he said something like ‘I don’t think that will be necessary’.” (p. 546)

[Anon. 10] “...even just the gesture of inviting the critics in to say hello all at once, so that you even saw each other rather than just being creatures slipping out of the shadows, that was rare.” (p. 549)

[Anon. 1] (So if (your editors) were going to revamp the arts page or come up with a new supplement they wouldn’t get all of the arts contributors in, and say ‘look this is what we’re thinking of doing, what are your ideas?’) “...they never have in my experience... No, it’s much more a master servant relationship I’m afraid.” (p. 515)

The level of functional support provided by the broadsheets may also have differed according to genre specialism, for example in respect of travel and concert ticket arrangements:

[Anon. 12] "...you end up doing lots of administration and just fixing things up. You don't have any secretarial power... no personal assistant... Again in the 1980s, I think the opera people and the classical people maybe had a bit more help because the Editor in the office would have his secretary obviously, so she would make sure he was sorted out. But we had to do all our own stuff. I think you'll find all critics were dealing directly with the PR's and making their own arrangements for everything." (p. 558)

Finally, when interviewees were asked to describe any sources of conflict within their working environment and how those conflicts were typically resolved, disagreements with editors, varying from minor to extreme, were often cited; for example:

[Anon 12] "I suppose the biggest source of conflict related to who's going to do what, I suppose... That I suppose would be an area of conflict in which the resolution is simply to do what the Arts Editor says. It's laid down by the Arts Editor. It's very hierarchical. If you have any sort of dispute or any sort of argument with an Arts Editor or even a deputy Arts Editor, let alone *the* Editor there is only one possible resolution, and that is that you do whatever they want you to do, or else you can take a hike, and that extends to just about any aspect of it... Quite early on I was astonished to discover what they expected of you. They'd phone you up on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, this happened to me once, they said 'we need you to write 400 words for the newspaper about something that happened yesterday...and we need it by 2 o'clock, you've got to do it', and I told one of these guys once, who was quite high up, I said 'no, sorry I'm going out to play tennis, can't do it', and he went totally ballistic, 'who do you think you are, who do you think you're talking to' etc. etc. It was such a tirade. I spoke to my actual Arts Editor about it and she said 'well he can make sure you never write for the paper again if you really do cross him, if you really don't do what he wants. I would do it'. But if he'd got my answer phone, if I had an answer phone, it would have been... anyway, so you really learn a few survival tricks. So another time if I want to go and play tennis on a Sunday morning I make sure I leave the answer phone on and now you've got you mobile of course so you have to watch that one as well. ...and another time I did a similar thing... I had to write a piece for *Rolling Stone*... I had a really big piece I was writing that had to be finished by later on that day, and they wanted me to write something, and I said 'no I simply can't'. You see the newspaper people, something happens maybe the night before, they have a meeting at 10 o'clock in the morning to decide what they're going to do for tomorrow's paper, then they decide 'ah we'll get (name anonymised) to write something about that', a little column explaining why that's important, and they want it by 3 o'clock. So they come out of their conference at 11 am and they phone you at about quarter past, or half past and say 'can you do 1000 words on...?'. I remember

one example: 'John Peel said the White Stripes are the greatest thing since Jimi Hendrix, so we need to have a 1000 word piece about the White Stripes by 4 o'clock... can you get hold of John Peel and get him to expand on that'. Well if you've got any other plans for that day you can forget it, this is what's expected of you." (pp. 559-560)

5.3 Summary

In setting the context for their writing several journalists described traditionalist and uncompromising editorial attitudes to broadsheet music criticism since at least the 1950s, with broadsheet arts editors, particularly at *The Times*, reportedly lacking any genuine concern for emergent and non-classical popular styles until at least the early 1980s; although *The Observer* and by association *The Guardian* seemed perhaps a little further ahead in their inclusion of such music. It was suggested that jazz criticism, by appearing on broadsheet pages in the 1950s, may have acted as a Trojan horse for popular music coverage, although even in the 1970s the broadsheets appeared not to have adopted a suitable lexicon for the coverage of pop music, and as late as the early 1980s being a rock and pop music critic for the broadsheet press was reported as still seeming like something of an oddity. Whilst most of the journalists revered the approaches to broadsheet music criticism adopted by their forebears, all claimed to have imprinted their own very personal critical styles upon their respective broadsheet pages during the 1980s. Influences upon their personal styles included non-musical factors such as needing to incorporate relevant musicological research, the desire to initiate wordplay, the constraints of short time scales and the need to tailor their writing to suit particular audiences. In contrast to the original hypothesis that broadsheet critics, particularly from the rock and pop genre, may have consciously adopted critical styles taken from the specialist music press, little evidence arose to confirm this, at least in the sense of any conscious permeation (although it was acknowledged that some writers from the specialist press moved into broadsheet writing positions). Instead, the rock and pop critics reported a sense of self-consciousness as they forged a new mode of discourse which would marry their genre to the broadsheet arts page. For the jazz critics, the fluid boundaries of their genre presented its own set of challenges, as they often found themselves addressing newcomers to the genre and struggling to achieve objectivity in their criticism of an inherently improvised art form.

Unsurprisingly, most journalists reported that editorial judgement dominated the decision-making process concerning arts page content. However, several also reported that significant shifts in editorial attitudes during the 1980s had major implications both for their own writing and the overall content of their respective broadsheet arts pages. Firstly, perhaps with the exception of *The Times*, whereas the early 1980s saw many music journalists given significant freedom to select material for coverage, as the decade progressed editors appear to have exerted greater control in order to fulfil their increasing desire to target a wider readership. This growing editorial ascendancy, combined with improved production practices towards the end of the decade, seems often to have resulted in the stipulation of increasingly specific word lengths, a move which some journalists felt had encroached upon their creative and intellectual freedom as writers. In addition to changing editorial attitudes, the arrival of a new generation of editorial personnel was also described as significant with the

appointment of Roger Alton as Arts Editor at *The Guardian* in 1985, from a former sports editorial position, cited as heralding a less culturally specialised approach to music coverage within that particular publication.

Secondly, many journalists described changes in the types of articles being commissioned during the latter half of the 1980s particularly in respect of a move away from overnight concert reviewing, the demise of the more lengthy 'think-piece' and, occurring simultaneously, a greater demand for preview and feature articles, accompanied also by an increased use of pictorial illustrations and arts page advertising. For one critic the demise of the overnight review signalled that concert reviews were no longer to be deemed worthy of serious critical treatment as 'news' by the editorial community, thus stripping concert reviews of their former purpose to an extent. It was also implied that the increased use of the 'glossy' feature and particularly the 'puff-piece' may have resulted, if not only for the latter 1980s, in decreased opportunities for critical independence as a result of their ever more corrupt and PR-influenced nature. This sense of corruptness was in turn linked to the formation of an increasingly superficial broadsheet press in which any serious criticism of English culture per se might have been deemed unacceptable. It was also implied that in some quarters broadsheet music editors became increasingly receptive to less serious writing in favour of that which might not, by the standards of earlier generations, be regarded as 'great' writing. For some, these shifts in editorial attitudes resulted in the broadsheet press of the 1980s increasingly acting as little more than a source of consumer guidance.

Thirdly, several journalists described how the 1980s saw an increasing editorial predilection for the rock and pop genre alongside a simultaneous decreasing editorial appetite for classical music. However, this growing emphasis on the increasingly well-defined rock and pop genres was also seen to coincide with the quelling of 'popular' music coverage in the wider sense, including certain sub-genre coverage, as arts pages increasingly adopted more distinct genre categories; one critic described how he as a jazz critic was covering niche music which did not easily fit into the jazz or pop categories. Interestingly, coverage of world music, as a newly emerging popular style towards the end of the decade, whilst allowed to permeate the arts pages, was assigned by editors to existing rock, pop or jazz critics rather than being awarded its own specialist genre commentators.

These shifting editorial attitudes were also reported to have corresponded with the gradual reorganisation of the traditional genre hierarchy of the broadsheet arts page. Around the beginning of the 1980s the superiority of classical music, and perhaps London-centric classical music culture, was considered inarguable by most interviewees, with the ratio of classical, versus other, music coverage reflecting this. Interestingly, for one classical music critic this supremacy was justified by virtue of the duration of a classical piece, relative to that of a rock or pop song. However, many interviewees affirmed that by the early 1990s the fortunes of the genres had clearly begun to shift in favour of rock and pop. The elevated status of these genres was attributed to several factors, including a desire to compete with the newly launched *Independent* newspaper, the increased amount of available page

space resulting from improved technological production practices, the preferences of new editorial post-holders, the decreased editorial appetite for overnight classical music concert reviews, the drive to attract younger readers in an increasingly competitive marketplace and, more recently, the anti-elitism of the New Labour government.

Changes in editorial values aside, several shifts in the media and publishing climate were also attributed with altering the course of broadsheet music criticism during the 1980s, including the advent or demise of other publications. In particular, the arrival of *The Independent* in 1986 was considered by many to have refreshed a formerly stagnant broadsheet landscape as a result of both its emphasis on arts listings and its idiosyncratic arts agenda; firstly it was described as applying an innovative and independent minded approach to the coverage of non-mainstream and contemporary music, alongside regular high-quality 'think-pieces' provided by Bayan Northcott, secondly it provided arts coverage which was not necessarily London-centric, with national coverage provided by numerous freelance regional critics, thirdly it put great emphasis on the visual appearance of the page with distinctive photo-journalism and illustrations accompanying large features, and finally it applied a serious critical perspective to rock and pop coverage, tailored in such a way as to appeal to an older generation of readers; the same generation of readers who were also presented with the glossy rock and pop music coverage of the newly launched *Q* magazine in the same year. However whilst *Q* magazine was blamed for homogenizing music criticism, as well as shifting the emphasis of articles from the personality of the writer to the subject of the article, *The Independent's* adoption of a very traditional approach to arts criticism was seen to have validated the serious critical stance still used by its long-standing counterparts.

Alongside these fresh additions to the newspaper and magazine arena, the extinction of several other music publications was also cited as significant. It emerged that prior to the 1980s a filtering process existed whereby certain other publications provided stepping stones for writers to advance into broadsheet positions, and hence when these publications ceased, most notably *Music and Musicians* and *The Listener*, so did the associated well-trodden entry routes into the broadsheet music criticism profession. In the wider music media, notwithstanding the vast changes in music reception resulting from the arrival of commercial radio and music video, it was suggested that the advent of Live Aid stripped away certain aspects of rock music's counter-cultural identity which in turn expanded the audience for the genre to which the broadsheets could target their arts content. Similarly, it seems that the arrival of the CD, and the resulting reissue of chronological material, provided broadsheets with ample opportunity for historical genre coverage through which they could again help attract a wider readership with the help of a more 'accessible' critical style.

In detailing their narratives of decline, this editorial drive towards greater accessibility emerged as a leitmotif throughout the interviews. Several critics sensed increasing pressure to ensure 'maximum intelligibility', both for their editors and readers, with their intended audience shifting from the specialist to the casual reader, particularly in the case of classical music criticism. This popularisation

of broadsheet music criticism resulted in the deliberate use of a more simplified, or at least less specialised, use of language which many journalists considered to have restricted their ability to uphold the critical standards of former years. In addition, the move towards multi-section broadsheets with more dispersed music coverage by an increased number of authors was also considered to have diluted the authority of their longstanding writers.

For many interviewees, changes in the way that music was marketed to the public acted as a key component in the decline of critical standards. Whilst none of the critics felt that their writing had been significantly curtailed in favour of increased arts page advertising, not even in light of *The Independent's* emphasis on large colour advertisements, the 1980s was described by one participant as 'the great decade of PR and marketing' with large sums of money available by which critics might be persuaded to write favourably about artists, generating a sense of mistrust certainly at least among critics themselves. Some writers complained that their work was increasingly being incorporated into artists' marketing agendas with their former critical supremacy undermined by the growing power of PR companies who, as a result of increased coverage through new and multi-section publications, could be increasingly selective in approaching writers to cover their artists' material. Furthermore, some rock writers felt that it was during the 1980s that their access to musicians became more tightly controlled by PR representatives, with direct contact increasingly only permitted in conjunction with the promotion of a new album or forthcoming tour. Several critics also described how the decade saw classical music increasingly publicized to a wider audience by promoting not the music itself but the performers, taking full advantage of their visual appeal wherever possible.

Similarly, the launch of Classic FM was cited as fuelling the popularisation of classical music since it further distinguished those audiences who required a traditional, in-depth intellectual commentary from those non-experts who required something more succinct and accessible. Broadsheet music coverage, it would seem, became increasingly focussed on the needs of ever more well-defined communities of music consumers, as opposed to addressing readers as listeners who might require a critical perspective on the intrinsic qualities of the music itself.

In pinpointing the timing of decline, many critics argued that the standard of writing in the specialist rock press became indistinctive, mediocre and insular after its heyday in the 1970s and early 1980s, whilst the highest standards of classical music criticism were located in the 1960s and 1970s. For one critic the 1980s evoked memories of a boom in the quantity of classical music coverage following the popularisation of the genre thanks to the success of Nigel Kennedy and The Three Tenors. However, for several others the decreased dominance of serious classical music criticism was epitomised by classical music's loss of hegemonic status on the broadsheet page; it was reported that whilst prior to the 1980s classical music coverage was often simply denoted by the heading of 'music', by the end of the decade it had to be labelled as 'classical music' in order to define it from the various other genre headings which had come to enjoy greater prominence on the arts page. For one critic the deterioration of serious classical music criticism was evidenced by the waning commitment of

journalists who, since the end of the 1980s, were unlikely to attend concerts armed with any prior reading or consideration of the musical score. Whilst two interviewees proposed that the timing of the deterioration occurred a little later, during the early to mid 1990s, they nevertheless agreed that the foundations for change were laid during the 1980s.

Many interviewees blamed the shifting perspective and degradation of standards upon the political environment under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; certainly it was attributed with creating the climate in which many changes to the performing arts and broadsheet publishing agendas were cultivated. In particular it seems to have initiated a new concept whereby the validity of a given art form related to its commercial popularity, whilst the government's reduction in public subsidy for the arts, in favour of increased commercial sponsorship, was blamed for the steady diminution of certain classical music events during the 1980s. As a demonstration of this new emphasis on commercial sponsorship one critic even recalled being required to provide the name of event sponsors in his articles. However, in looking beyond Thatcherism, another critic blamed the nature of Western democracy per se for this increased preoccupation with the needs of consumers in the sense that, as a result of very tightly controlled markets, it has created what he termed a 'consumocracy' wherein consumers are in reality presented only with a very narrow set of choices.

The massive upheaval of the English broadsheet publishing environment following the Wapping Dispute, itself made possible by the political climate of the time, was reported to have had a significant effect upon the working practices and working relationships of many broadsheet music journalists. It seems that the highly emotive nature of the dispute created mistrust and insecurity between music critics, their colleagues and respective broadsheet 'employers', whilst also introducing barriers, in some cases, to the musicians who might otherwise have been their subjects. A further barrier was also inadvertently erected once music journalists no longer needed to physically attend their respective broadsheet offices to write or deliver their work, as the new computerised production practices enabled them to submit their copy electronically from home, therefore minimising their direct contact with colleagues. For their editors it seems that the improved technical production methods, combined with the move away from overnight concert reviewing, allowed greater planning and flexibility in determining the length of individual articles as well as overall arts page composition.

In exploring the methods by which the participant journalists were recruited it was apparent that most had been sourced through personal networks, typically involving contacts from other publications or universities, with the possession of an Oxbridge education emerging in an uncanny number of cases. However, the ability to write well was considered more important than the ownership of any formal musical education, and on the whole only their former writing for other publications was used as an appropriate measure of suitability for a broadsheet writing role; only one critic reported having undergone a formal recruitment process involving an interview and selection test (albeit for a non-music critic position upon initial employment with the publication). Certainly it was the classical

music critics who most often reported having undergone a form of apprenticeship, involving contact with more senior music writers, during the early part of their careers.

For the early 1980s at least, it would seem that the classical music critics' supremacy, in terms of allocated page space and greater sense of professional intimacy with their arts editors, was mirrored in their terms of engagement, particularly in terms of financial reward, job security and levels of functional support received. However, by the end of the decade it appears that the broadsheets began abandoning their former tendency to employ staff critics, preferring instead to engage freelance contributors; hence the rock and pop critics, as relative latecomers to the arts pages, seemed most likely to be engaged on a freelance basis and therefore enjoy fewer rewards. One critic argued that this increased use of freelance critics was also partly responsible for diminishing standards since, as they were far removed from the processes and people through which the arts pages were compiled, they were more likely to act primarily for their own gain, bearing no responsibility for the overall critical quality of the newspaper. Of the freelance writers interviewed for this study none reported having ever received any formal training or development from their respective broadsheets, but perhaps more surprisingly neither did their employed 'staff' counterparts, other than perhaps some informal mentoring. Most critics described harsh working arrangements with non-transparent salary levels, very little purposeful editorial feedback (other than the straight acceptance, rejection or editing of their writing), little respect for their personal commitments and pay rates pay which did not necessarily increase each year or even keep abreast of inflation. A significant degree of job insecurity was also noted, with the few writers who were lucky enough to secure retainers often perpetually uncertain whether theirs would be renewed each year.

Finally, in terms of employee relations, it was clear that the music critics were not invited to participate in editorial decision making processes, including those concerning arts page content, design or redesign. In very few instances did writers know, meet or have any form of professional relationship with their peers. Where conflicts arose they often centred upon decisions associated with the allocation of artists requiring coverage, or editorial adjustments to their work, with editors wielding considerable control over the professional, and sometimes personal, time of music critics in order to fulfil the needs of the broadsheet press.

In summary, all of the journalists agreed that between 1981 and 1991 the face of English broadsheet music journalism began to change. Most journalists depicted several first hand experiences of alterations to working practices and recalled shifts in editorial attitudes which altered the nature of writing required of them. For all of the participants these changes, whether individually or collectively, were considered to have heralded a downturn in the quality of broadsheet music criticism, a deterioration cultivated by the complex interrelationships between the political, media and publishing climate of the time.

Chapter 6 – Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 - Introduction

This research not only supports Frith and Savage's claims that the 1980s heralded significant change in the approach to popular culture criticism, but it also provides new evidence, of a quantitative and qualitative nature, to substantiate developments which until now have existed primarily as the anecdotal accounts of a handful of authors. As such, this chapter triangulates the key findings from each of the three sources used within this study, namely the sample of historical newspapers, interviews with music journalists and other relevant primary and secondary sources (6.2.a – 6.2.e), **with each finding cross-referenced to its earlier location within this thesis (shown in brackets)**. The possible causes for the changes evidenced here are then discussed (6.3), along with their perceived negative impact (6.4), before the constraints and limitations (6.5) and finally the conclusion to this thesis is presented (6.6).

6.2 The changes observed

6.2.a The nature of broadsheet music coverage

This research suggests that during the years 1981 to 1991 a series of changes occurred which signalled the beginning of a major upheaval in the nature of English broadsheet music coverage.

One of the most notable shifts witnessed here was the change in emphasis upon particular article types. Firstly, echoing Frith and Savage's claims that newspapers became increasingly reliant upon 'feature' writing (p. 28), many journalists indicated that it was during this period that broadsheets began to show a predilection for feature articles (Sutcliffe p. 146, Finch p. 147, Northcott p. 148, Sandall p. 156) and indeed Hilary Finch recalled writing her first preview article for *The Times* newspaper (p. 147) during this period. Whilst the quantitative analysis conducted here did not reveal any obvious chronological increase in such articles, it did reveal that a) feature writing was most often associated with rock and pop music (Fig. 17), genres whose broadsheet coverage did increase during the period examined (Fig. 5), and that b) newcomer *The Independent* generally included more feature articles than any of its longer established counterparts (p. 81), both factors perhaps indicative of an emerging market trend towards this type of writing towards the end of the period examined.

Similarly, an increased presence of music-related obituary material was observed, both in terms of the quantity of music obituaries (Figs. 41 and 42) and the area of page space devoted to their accompanying pictorial illustrations (Fig. 49), shifts which were attributed by interviewees to the arrival of *The Independent* (Kenyon p. 433, Sutcliffe p. 505). These developments, accompanied also by a trend which saw obituary authors increasingly being named (Fig. 47), whilst seemingly not covered within any of the secondary literature to date, may indicate that editors had begun to seize upon the potential for such writing as alternative forms of feature article, as opposed to mere public announcements; further evidence perhaps of the shift away from more critical styles of coverage.

In line with John Percival's recollections of an increased prevalence of previews as opposed to reviews (p. 38), several music journalists had experienced increased demand for preview articles and also a growing need for their writing to incorporate references to the commercial context for music, such as forthcoming tours, recording releases and events sponsorship (Sinclair p. 140 and p. 146, Finch p. 175, Griffiths p. 172, Sutcliffe p. 173, Sandall pp. 174-175); one also complained that access to musicians became more tightly controlled by PR representatives during the period examined (Sandall p. 164). The quantitative analysis indeed provided evidence to support these claims by illustrating a) a distinct increase in rock, pop and classical preview articles from around 1988 onwards (Fig. 16) b) a notable increase in previews in *The Guardian* newspaper (Fig. 14) and c) *The Independent's* publication of a significant number of articles containing preview material (Figs. 12 and 14).

A shift in emphasis towards the reader as a consumer, as opposed to one interested in reading about art and culture for its own sake, was suggested by both the significant increase in music-related event guides (Fig. 15), and Sinclair's recollection of a new requirement to compile 'listings' for *The Times* (p. 155) affirms Williams' (p. 31) account of the birth of the listings section during the period reviewed. The growing tendency for broadsheet music writing to be accessorised with music-related competitions, giveaways and charts (Figs. 50 and 53), again supporting Frith (p. 23), Cloonan (p. 21), Warner (p. 29) and Frith and Savage's (p. 28) claims of an increasing preoccupation with the needs of the consumer. Several journalists reported that their role had become increasingly concerned with the provision of consumer guidance (e.g. Sandall pp. 174-175), and whilst Frith (p. 23) and Gudmundsson et al. (p. 22) had observed this in relation to rock critics, the interviews conducted here suggested that classical music writers were not immune from this shift (Sutcliffe p. 144 and Finch p. 144).

This intensification of commercial influences upon broadsheet music coverage was further evidenced here by a quantitative increase in the number of music adverts which appeared in the sample group, such that by 1991 all daily publications appear to have at least doubled their level of music advertising compared to 1981 (or 1987 in the case of *The Independent*) (Fig. 25). A marked increase in the use of colour advertisements was also noted from 1990 (Fig. 30), particularly in the weekend magazines accompanying *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and *The Independent* (p. 88). These shifts correspond with the accounts provided by Théberge (p. 25) and Gillett (p. 24) which described music magazines' increasingly heavy reliance upon advertising revenue during the period examined. However, whereas Dawson Scott (p. 20) and Frith (p. 23) argued that rock music critics were significantly more likely to have their work pushed aside to make room for the placement of advertisements, very few of the journalists interviewed here, irrespective of genre specialism, reported such practices having any major detrimental effects upon their work during the period examined (e.g. Griffiths, p. 162, Gelly p. 175, Finch p. 175).

Finally, and occurring simultaneously with the rising dominance of these particular article types, came the diminution of certain other longer-established modes of coverage; most notably, and again echoing John Percival's sentiments (p. 38), several interviewees recalled the demise of the overnight concert

review during the period examined (e.g. Greenfield p. 146, Griffiths p. 153 and p. 169), and indeed the quantitative analysis confirmed that both *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times* reduced their overall provision of review articles over the period examined (Fig. 13) (with the exception of a gradual increase in rock and pop reviews, particularly rock, from 1986 onwards (Fig. 18)). Furthermore, several journalists, particularly those responsible for classical music coverage, complained that the length of their articles, and the space available for them, became increasingly curtailed (e.g. Sutcliffe pp. 146-147, Oakes pp. 167-168 and p. 171, Northcott p. 171), and located the demise of the more lengthy and critically adept 'think-piece' within the 1980s (Northcott p. 148, Oakes pp. 167-168). Whilst the quantitative analysis did not reveal a dramatic decrease in the average number of words per review, at least in respect of those reviews authored by the participant journalists, some evidence of a slight downward trend, or at least a levelling off, was observed despite the acknowledged limitations inherent within the categorisation of these article types (Figs. 54 and 55).

6.2.b The presentation of music content

It was not only the nature of music coverage which appears to have changed during the period examined but also its presentation, with one very obvious shift being the increased use of pictorial illustration, although this development also seems to have been scarcely mentioned within the secondary literature to date. Firstly, this research has evidenced distinctive increases in the number of pictures accompanying classical, rock and contemporary music-related articles from 1986, 1987 and 1988 respectively, and particularly within *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* (Fig. 31). Interestingly, from very early on *The Independent* included more pictures than either *The Times* or *The Guardian* had incorporated in any of the previous years included in this sample, however from 1988 onwards both of the latter increased their inclusion of music-related illustration such that by 1991 their commitment to illustration more closely matched that of their new counterpart (Fig. 31). Secondly, analysis of the area of page space devoted to pictures revealed increases in both *The Independent* and *The Guardian* from 1987 onwards (Fig. 35). Thirdly, in terms of genre, an overall increase in picture space was identified for jazz, contemporary and classical music-related articles during the period under review (Fig. 36); this change within the latter genre group appears to correspond with the accounts of those journalists who recalled a shift in classical music marketing strategies during the 1980s, with PR companies touting the genre to a wider audience through emphasis on the appearance of its performers (e.g. Sutcliffe pp. 146-147, Kenyon p. 165, Maddocks pp. 165-166). Furthermore, the combination of these apparent quantitative increases and the interviewees' recollections of a growing emphasis upon photographic illustrations (e.g. Finch p. 147 and pp. 158-159, Northcott p. 159) may indeed provide evidence of an infiltration of style from the glossy magazines, as suggested by Warner (p. 29), if only in respect of layout and presentation.

In line with Tunstall's claims (p. 45) that the highly competitive newspaper environment of the mid 1980s prompted dramatic shifts in the range and volume of available news publications, and Frith and Savage's reference to the expansion of new supplements (p. 28), this research has quantified dramatic increases in broadsheet size between 1981 and 1991 (with the exception of *The Independent on Sunday* which was only included in this study from 1990 onwards), including the evolution of

countless new themed supplements (pp. 101-102); indeed the evidence here has illustrated music coverage migrating away from appearance upon, typically, a single page of arts coverage, to placement upon multiple pages (more than ten in some instances) and often under a multitude of different section headings, either within the main body of the publication or within the accompanying supplements. This growth in supplements, particularly those in magazine format, perhaps further demonstrates the broadsheets' attempts to tap into the new glossy style magazine boom which occurred during this period. Many of the journalists interviewed here reported on this development (e.g. Sinclair pp. 155-156, Finch p. 156) and some of its possible consequences, which included increased work opportunities for a greater number of journalists (Davis p. 170) and public relations officers gaining the ability to be increasingly selective when choosing journalists to review their products (Sandall pp. 174-175), both contributing perhaps to the perceived reduction in levels of reader influence reported by interviewees (e.g. Davis p. 170).

6.2.c Shifting genre hierarchies

As seen in Chapter 1, several authors, particularly Frith and Savage (pp. 27-28), Guttenplan (pp. 28-29), Maus et al. (pp. 29-30), Sturges (p. 32) and Frith (pp. 37-38) have already claimed that the 1980s saw music coverage in the English media adopt an increasingly populist stance. The evidence gathered here from both the broadsheet publications and the journalist interviews not only supports these claims but also provides new evidence of an emerging reorganisation of the traditional genre hierarchy upon the broadsheet arts page.

Firstly, many interviewees recounted a growing editorial penchant for the rock and pop genres (e.g. Sinclair p. 152, Sandall p. 152, Gelly p. 152, Anon. 8 p. 154, Oakes p. 154), and indeed the quantitative analysis conducted here revealed dramatic increases in such genre coverage in both *The Guardian* and *The Times* during the latter half of the period examined, with a notable eight fold increase in rock music coverage in the latter between 1981 and 1991 (Fig. 5). Pop-related articles were those most likely to achieve an entire page of coverage and were also most frequently found near the top of the page (Fig. 37), and thus were quite literally elevated above their fellow genres.

Secondly, and in stark contrast to the rising fortunes of popular music, several journalists described a decreased editorial appetite for classical music (e.g. Finch p. 147, Sinclair p. 152, Griffiths p. 153, Kenyon pp. 153-154), and indeed London-centric classical coverage, as the decade progressed. The quantitative analysis conducted here highlighted a distinctive year on year decrease in classical music coverage within *The Times*, whose coverage decreased by almost half between 1981 and 1991 (Fig. 2), and a decline in the coverage of both classical music and contemporary music in *The Observer* over the same period (Fig. 9). A further manifestation of the apparently dwindling hegemony of classical music was also observed by some interviewees (Sutcliffe p. 144, Finch p. 166, Maddocks p. 167) who noted that at the beginning of the 1980s the 'Music' section referred specifically to classical music, but that by the end of the decade classical music needed to be labelled specifically as such in order to distinguish it from the many other genres occupying the broadsheet arts pages. In support of these claims, evidence from the database shows that *The Times* newspaper added the 'classical' subheading

to the record reviews section from 1987 onwards. Interestingly, these developments echo Cloonan's account that "pop is usually reviewed *as* pop and seldom, if ever, as *music*",²⁷⁶ and perhaps demonstrate the broadsheets' initial refusal to award popular music coverage with equal status to the classical genre. However, whilst the fortunes of serious classical music coverage may have dwindled, some interviewees suggested that coverage of classical music which had been popularised for the mass market through performers like Nigel Kennedy, Vanessa Mae and The Three Tenors, increasingly won the favour of broadsheet editors (Kenyon p. 165, Maddocks pp. 165-166), suggesting perhaps that editors began to shift their former conception of 'classical' music away from one which implied expertise and elitism towards one which reflected market forces, in their bid to become accessible to a wider audience.

Thirdly, this research has evidenced the arrival of roots music coverage within the broadsheet press; indeed the increased quantity of roots music event guides (Fig. 15), observed from 1987, indicates its nascent presence. Wall (p. 38) had suggested that John Peel increasingly devoted his attention to world and roots music during the late 1980s and the interviews with Robin Denselow (p. 145) and Dave Gelly (p. 145) provided similar recollections of a growing editorial interest in such coverage. Interestingly, whilst world music was allowed to permeate the arts pages, it seems often to have been assigned to existing rock, pop or jazz critics rather than having been awarded its own specialist commentators, perhaps confirming its essentially popular status in the eyes of broadsheet editors.

Finally, whilst Brennan (pp. 35 -36) highlighted the increasing importance of broadsheet coverage for jazz musicians, the level of jazz content within the sample group examined here appeared relatively static (p. 74). Several interviewees described ingrained difficulties with the determination of an appropriate mode for jazz criticism (Davies pp. 137-138, Cook p. 138, Northcott p. 138), with writers seemingly polarised between the adoption of an accessible stance or a more serious critical lexicon, thus echoing Philip Larkin's calls to avoid both "undiscriminating praise"²⁷⁷ and adherence to a "party line."²⁷⁸ It is unclear whether, or how, these difficulties may have contributed to the fortunes of the genre observed here, however with different critics addressing disparate audiences, it is possible that broadsheet Editors may have been deterred from increasing jazz coverage since its ability to aid their mission to attract a younger and broader readership may have appeared less compelling than the case for increased popular music coverage.

²⁷⁶ Cloonan, Martin: "Exclusive! The British Press and Popular Music: The story so far...", as in Jones, *Pop Music and the Press*, p. 129.

²⁷⁷ Larkin, Philip: *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961 - 1971*, p. 21.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

6.2.d The styles of writing associated with different genres

This research has indicated several differences between, and changes within, the styles of writing applied to particular genre coverage within the broadsheets examined here. The classical, early, contemporary, and contemporary classical music articles not only contained by far the greatest incidence of specialised musical language (section 4.2.1.1), and adopted a more learned writing style than their rock, pop and jazz counterparts (section 4.2.6.1), perhaps as a result of their education and familiarity with long-established critical traditions. Indeed several interviewees were known to have studied English at Oxford (Appendix GGG), a factor which Frith and Meech (p. 47) have argued provides journalists with a greater appreciation of the careful application of the written word. However, this research has also indicated a possible chronological expansion in the inclusion of background information and an increase in the breadth and depth of such content (section 4.2.2.1), factors corresponding with Maus' (p. 30) observation that around this time critics were no longer deemed to be articulating advanced tastes to elite audiences and were becoming increasingly concerned with the cultural contexts for music. Perhaps also related to issues of tradition, the classical music authors, and interestingly also the jazz writers, appeared to have offered relatively few value judgements or evaluative statements, particularly of a negative nature (section 4.2.5.1 and 4.2.5.3), perhaps a further consequence of the broadsheets drive to target classical music coverage at a wider audience.

Ingrams (p. 45) has already suggested that broadsheets have progressively 'dumbed-down' in order to attract a younger, albeit in his view 'ill-defined', readership and interestingly several classical music journalists recalled a decreasing editorial requirement for their writing to be technically informed (e.g. Finch p. 167, Sutcliffe p. 167, Oakes pp. 167-168, Northcott p. 168); a shift which was borne out by one interviewee's observation that towards the end of the 1980s music journalists increasingly attended concerts without having conducted any prior reading or having given any advance consideration to the musical score (Northcott p. 171). Bridle's claims (p. 37) that classical music critics lost much of their influence in the early 1990s as a result of decreased coverage and 'editorial philistinism' corresponded with one interviewee's (p. 150) claim to have very rarely worked for anyone at *The Times* who had shown the same degree of expert concern for the quality of classical music criticism as his former Arts Editor John Higgins, in post until 1988, an almost identical sentiment to that expressed by John Percival, former dance critic for *The Times* (p. 38).

By contrast, the style of writing within the rock and pop samples examined here appeared flamboyant and creative, containing frequent and pronounced use of metaphor, rhetoric, embellished text, 'every-day' phrases, autobiographical references and blatant displays of authorial expertise (section 4.2.6.2), influenced perhaps by traditions established within the specialist music press of former years. However, whereas Calcutt (p. 37) and Savage (p. 40) have implied an infiltration of critical styles from the specialist music press, each of the rock and pop music journalists interviewed here described forging their own unique styles of writing without necessarily feeling the need to adopt modes of writing akin to those found within either the specialist music press (e.g. Sinclair p. 136, Sandall p. 136, Denselow p. 137), the classical tradition, as perhaps did William Mann or Richard Buckles in their

early coverage of the Beatles (pp. 18-19) or the more sensationalist approaches which Calcutt has associated with the tabloid press (p. 21).

The rock and pop sample articles also contained the highest incidence of lay-musical terminology as opposed to specialist musical language (section 4.2.1.2), and whilst some of the musical terminology related to compositional qualities none of the journalists reported referring to musical scores and indeed Sinclair (pp. 139-140) recalled having to make immediate judgements on the music he was expected to review, often after only one or two hearings. The qualitative analysis of the rock and pop articles indicated an increasing tendency, along with their jazz counterparts (section 4.2.2.3), to refer to commercial factors (section 4.2.2.2), echoing the journalists' claims to have felt increasingly tied into artists' marketing processes (e.g. Sandall pp. 174-175). Furthermore, the rock and pop, and to a slightly lesser extent jazz, writing also contained the highest incidence of audience descriptions (section 4.2.4.2), perhaps as a means of attaching particular types of reader to these newly emphasised genres at a time when, as Sinclair (p. 155) and Sandall (pp. 160-161) pointed out, audiences for popular music were in transition.

It was also discovered that the articles in these genre groups contained a far higher concentration of references to named music, musicians and venues not directly connected to the performance being reviewed (section 6.2.3.6), perhaps demonstrating the infiltration of the new forms of cultural journalism being fostered by the style bibles, as suggested by McRobbie (p. 25), but equally perhaps an illustration of the means, as suggested by Klein (p. 33), by which rock music critics assert their authority not by demonstrating specialist musical knowledge learned through musical education, as is often the case for their classical music counterparts, but through the demonstration of proficient writing and breadth of subject knowledge.

In considering the styles of writing applied by both the classical and popular music journalists interviewed here, and those illustrated within the sample of articles examined in Chapter 4, it is possible to see that coverage of all genre groups was required to conform to rigid requirements imposed by the broadsheet format. Not only were the acts and recordings to be covered predetermined by editors (Finch p. 141, Sinclair p. 141, Anon. 10 pp. 141-142; Anon. 1, Anon. 9, Anon. 12, all pp. 186-187) but their writing was required to conform to the relevant house style, increasingly prescribed in terms of length requirements, and then edited to the satisfaction of editors, who were reportedly less knowledgeable about music in some instances (e.g. Sutcliffe p. 144), with the article title often added on without the journalist being consulted (Sinclair p. 150). In forging the very first voices for regular popular music coverage upon the broadsheet arts pages Sinclair (p. 136) assumed it necessary to avoid the very colloquial critical modes associated with the rock press, and Sandall (p. 136) described what felt like very burdensome broadsheet requirements in comparison to those relating to his writing for *Q* magazine. In contrast, the classical music writers, certainly near the beginning of the period examined and whilst working for longer-established editors like John Higgins, were perhaps mindful of an expectation to conform to the very exacting standards of music criticism laid down by their forebears, like William Mann, Desmond Shawe-Taylor and Peter Heyworth

(Sutcliffe p. 135, Kenyon p. 165, Northcott pp. 170-171). However, in each case, it is arguable that music writers within the broadsheet press were, as also suggested by Forde (p. 32), increasingly de-democratised by editors whose strategically, and perhaps therefore more commercially, motivated stipulations saw the voices of individual writers absorbed seamlessly into the homogenised voice of the overall publication. As such, whilst Christgau (p. 35) has decried modes of music criticism which are constrained by the stipulations of formal training, equally the music criticism presented within the broadsheets examined here, and the creative practices through which they were borne, were undoubtedly increasingly restrained by the traditions and expectations associated with writing for a serious newspaper.

6.2.e Employment conditions

The review of secondary literature, at Chapter 1, has shown that very little has been written to date in relation to English broadsheet music critics' employment circumstances, and therefore the interviews conducted here have provided a wealth of new material in this respect.

When describing their recruitment (section 5.2.9.a), many journalists' accounts mirrored Porter's earlier description (p. 19) of a highly informal recruitment process which, as also observed by Tomalin (p. 46), was often based upon personal networks and discussions over lunch. Interviewees' qualifications ranged from possessing university degrees to being completely self-taught; however most had written for at least one other publication, usually a periodical or magazine, and it was primarily this experience which secured their appointment. However, whereas this research has indicated an emerging reconfiguration of the traditional genre hierarchy, the rising fortunes of rock and pop coverage appears to have borne little correspondence to their respective broadsheet writers' terms of engagement.

Frith (p. 23) has already suggested that higher arts critics enjoyed a more elevated status than their popular arts counterparts, resulting in a hierarchy which effectively mirrored that of the arts being evaluated, and indeed this research has shown that classical music writers, by virtue of their often longer-standing employment arrangements, most frequently enjoyed a greater sense of job security and preferential terms of engagement (section 5.2.9.b). Classical music critics were the most likely group to have enjoyed a more closely guided apprenticeship with access to more senior music writers during the early part of their careers (e.g. Appendix GG, first paragraph) although no interviewees reported receiving any formal training by their respective broadsheet 'employers' (section 5.2.9.c), a practise still rife even in 2007 according to Frith and Meech (p. 47). As such, and in line with models of workforce flexibility such as that proposed by Atkinson (Appendix III),²⁷⁹ it would seem that the more recently appointed music critics acted as mere 'periphery' workers whilst their longer standing counterparts, by virtue of their contracted staff status, served as 'core' workers, therefore providing

²⁷⁹ Itself conceived in the mid-1980s with a view to helping employers achieve greater workforce and managerial flexibility.

skills more likely to be considered “extremely important to the employer”,²⁸⁰ at least at the time of their initial appointment.

A significant degree of job insecurity was reported here (section 5.2.9.b) since most writers were engaged on a freelance basis, indeed the broadsheets’ growing tendency to move away from employing staff critics meant that rock and pop critics, as relative latecomers to the arts pages, were more likely to be engaged on a freelance basis and therefore enjoy fewer rewards. The move towards casualisation was perhaps also indicative of the broadsheets’ decreased desire to accumulate musical intellectual property, as perhaps they may have done with their specialist staff writers in previous decades. Of the few writers lucky enough to secure retained contracts, many experienced a perpetual sense of uncertainty as to whether theirs would be renewed each year. Interviewees reported non-transparent rates of pay, with no guarantee that pay rates would increase annually or keep abreast with inflation, and discrepancies certainly existed in relation to the scope for claiming back expenses, reminiscent of Peel’s claims (pp. 30-31) to have often been both personally out of pocket and having received very little monetary reward for his efforts. Even with regards to non-financial reward, writers received very little from their respective editors beyond the mere publication of their work.

In terms of employee relations (section 5.2.9.d), it appears that interviewees were never consulted, either individually or collectively, upon matters affecting arts page content or design, and where conflicts arose, typically concerning the allocation of event coverage or editorial amendments to their work, it was clear that editorial authority reigned absolute, even where this impinged upon writers’ personal time. In very few instances did writers know, meet or have any form of professional relationship with their peers, and most recounted receiving very little purposeful editorial feedback other than the straight acceptance, rejection or editorial amendment of their writing. Such relationships, with no scope for participation or involvement perhaps illustrates how little regard editors assigned to music journalists as contributors to the overall success of the publications, surprising perhaps given the broadsheets’ increasing attempts to use music coverage as a means to increase their readership and profitability.

6.3 The motives for change

Many of the changes observed above, whether dramatic or subtle, point towards a period of broadsheet music coverage in which editorial focus became increasingly aligned with the processes and priorities of music consumption. Editors favoured new types of article which offered easily accessible consumer guidance and discarded older modes of writing aimed at specialist readers and elite audiences, they placed greater emphasis upon the visual appearance of the arts page and began to reconfigure the long established genre hierarchy of music coverage. A discussion of the possible derivations for these changes is presented below.

²⁸⁰ Marchington, Mick and Adrian Wilkinson: *People Management and Development*, p. 26.

Predominantly, the interviewees who participated in this research, attributed this shift in focus to the domestic policies of the Thatcher government. Echoing sentiments expressed by Frith and Savage (pp. 27-28), Cloonan (p. 21) and Denselow (p. 25), interviewees suggested that the revolutionary economic climate of the Thatcher government saw the balance of power shift away from the critic towards music industry public relations departments whose influence was amplified as a consequence of the governments' free market policies, leaving broadsheet editors increasingly subject to their sway. This shift appears to have been aided by the burgeoning page space available within broadsheets and other music publications, since it enabled PR representatives to become increasingly selective in their choice of reviewers and thus almost guarantee a positive review by a journalist known to look favourably upon their artists. Reminiscent of the descriptions of increased fragmentation, classification and categorisation of music readers provided by Gudmundsson et al. (p. 22) and Lindberg et al. (p. 37), it seems that this development was accompanied by the dawning of increasingly well-defined market groups; determined by music industry marketing agencies and adopted by the broadsheets and other publications as the basis for their marketing efforts and the genre headings under which their music content would be cast. However, as one interviewee also suggested (Gelly p. 145), this attitudinal shift towards more narrowly defined genre categories may have unwittingly resulted in a less inclusive approach to 'popular' music since music which did not easily fit into a specific category, such as that which might be considered popular by a senior citizen, became less likely to receive broadsheet coverage.

The shifts in editorial attitudes were also attributed to proprietorial changes, themselves inspired by the Thatcher government's drive towards privatisation. The new owners' drive to increase profitability, by striving to attract a wider readership, prompted the instalment of new and appropriately focussed editors, appointed for their ability to transform the arts pages rather than their artistic or critical expertise, and whose aim was to ensure that their respective publications could succeed in an increasingly competitive market place. This new generation of editors, such as Roger Alton, were no doubt keen to make their mark in a volatile broadsheet environment and consequently seized upon the opportunity to transform former approaches to arts coverage and take full advantage of the new possibilities for revised page layouts, the use of colour and visual journalism made possible through emerging technological developments, as demonstrated for example by the significant redesign of *The Guardian* in 1988.

The cultural climate associated with the Thatcher government was reported to have caused the validity of different art forms to become more strongly related to their commercial popularity and to reductions in public arts subsidies (e.g. Oakes p. 171), leading to increased commercial sponsorship (Griffiths p. 172) and ensuring the demise of certain classical music events; each factor further contributing to the broadsheets' move away from more traditional modes of music writing. Murdoch's view of *The Times* newspaper as a constituent of the entertainment industry (p. 43) demonstrates the way in which the new commercial focus facilitated the broadsheets' transition towards the acquisition of increased cultural capital and status as cultural goods in their own right, providing unique access to music and musicians through feature-style writing, quality

photojournalism and a style of writing intended to be accessible to the general reader. Arguably, since feature writing disposed with some of the time pressures associated with overnight concert reviewing, lent itself more readily to accessible modes of discourse, the use of impressive colour illustrations and the utilisation of the newly available production technology editors appear to have been empowered to become increasingly prescriptive about the length, content and presentation of music articles, again creating a further shift in the balance of power away from the critic, in turn possibly diminishing writers scope for creativity.

A significant theme throughout the interviews was the importance of the 1986 Wapping Dispute, itself a consequence of the political climate of the time. Many interviewees reported (section 5.2.5) how the dispute had a detrimental effect upon working practices and working relationships, and affirmed that the technological developments which it facilitated enabled them to prepare and submit their copy electronically from home; dynamics which perhaps contrived to affirm a new epoch characterised by the physical and spiritual detachment of critics from their respective broadsheet publishers. The government's move towards de-unionisation, the cause of the Wapping Dispute, and the subsequent preference for casual rather than staff writers may, as one journalist suggested (Anon. 5 p. 184), have understandably led journalists to shift their focus away from the critical quality of the publications to which they contributed towards their own personal income. Disempowered by their status as 'casual' workers it seems likely that music critics would have felt removed from the central decision making processes of the publications and therefore powerless, if not deterred or prohibited, from any attempt to exert influence over the music content of the arts pages; the "master servant relationship" described by one interviewee (p. 186) seems to have been favoured over one which may alternatively have seen critics and editors working together to nurture broadsheet music criticism.

The improved efficiency of print production processes was also associated with dramatic changes in the quantity and nature of other available publications in the marketplace. Of these, the launch of *The Independent* in 1986 was considered by many interviewees to have incited countless changes within its longer running broadsheet counterparts, specifically as a result of its idiosyncratic arts agenda, emphasis on arts listings, distinctive photojournalism, large colour advertisements, innovative approach to non-mainstream music coverage and regular high-quality 'think pieces', as provided by Bayan Northcott; indeed, the quantitative analysis conducted here revealed several possible cases of mimicry within *The Times* and *The Guardian* following the launch of *The Independent* (e.g. Fig. 5, Fig. 31, Fig. 34, Fig. 50). Furthermore, by departing from the traditional London-centric approach to music coverage, using freelance regional critics, and applying a serious critical perspective to rock and pop coverage it was suggested that *The Independent* intended to appeal to the same older, and geographically broader, generation of readers being drawn to the new popular glossy publications entering the market during the 1980s. Thus, *The Independent's* originality, described by Maddocks as "fresh seasoning" (p. 158), motivated by its competitiveness for readers, appears to have provoked

both *The Times* and *The Guardian* to revise their former approaches to music coverage.²⁸¹

In addition to the influences of *The Independent*, those other publications most often cited by interviewees as influencing broadsheet music content were glossy magazines *The Face* and *Q* magazine launched in 1980 and 1986 respectively, and colour pop magazines *Smash Hits* and *No. 1*. In respect of the former, and as discussed above (section 5.2.4), Savage and Calcutt have implied that the movement of writers from glossy magazines to the broadsheet press perhaps resulted in an element of cross-fertilisation of critical styles. The critical discourse analysis of articles, presented in Chapter 4, did offer some evidence that the modes of dialogue relating to rock and pop music within the broadsheet press may have been imbued with certain characteristics common to the specialist music press, and therefore whilst the interviewees included here did not confirm an outright imitation of the specialist press style, it seems highly likely that, in creating a new language for broadsheet popular music coverage, critics would have been influenced, consciously or subconsciously, by the critical traditions associated with the specialist music press of the 1970s.

Conversely, some interviewees from a classical music background suggested that the extinction of other publications, most notably *Music and Musicians* and *The Listener* (Northcott p. 159, Kenyon pp. 159-160, Sutcliffe p. 160, Maddocks p. 160), were also significant since they had acted as well-trodden entry routes and training grounds for potential broadsheet critics. These publications appear to have acted as institutions through which would-be broadsheet critics could learn their trade and develop a network of contacts with established critics, the demise of which may however have resulted in scope for a much wider pool of entrants into the profession and facilitated the infiltration of new practices and personnel, and perhaps in turn a greater degree of tolerance for such.

The period examined also bore witness to a multitude of further changes within both the music industry and the wider music media which affected both the requirements and expectations of music editors, critics, audiences and consumers. For example, the emergence of the compact disc at the beginning of the 1980s, as cited by Sandall (pp. 160-161) and the subsequent wave of back-catalogue reissues in the new compact format undoubtedly generated a sizeable new body of material for critics to review, the historical nature of which surely presented critics with significant opportunities to display their historical genre knowledge and expertise. The provision of such writing, with its potential appeal to audiences young and old and any inherent former counter-cultural politics diluted by its historical nature, no doubt mapped itself perfectly onto the strategic aims of the broadsheets in their drive to attract a wider readership, perhaps accounting for some of the increased prevalence of rock and pop coverage evidenced here. Similarly, the advent of Live Aid in 1985 was deemed to have diluted the counter-cultural identity of rock music (Sandall p.160), and thus perhaps signalled the

²⁸¹ Whilst not cited as being influential by any of the interviewees, the launch of the *Sunday Correspondent* on 17th September 1989, which positioned itself as a 'quality tabloid' is noteworthy since it would, to some extent, have competed for readers with the longer standing broadsheet publications, until ceasing publication on 25th November 1990.

broadsheets' potential to tailor rock and pop music coverage to an expanded audience. However, whilst such coverage may not have blatantly addressed any particular political agenda, Denselow (p. 25) has pointed out that popular music coverage within the national press may in some cases have been politically motivated in connection with the 1987 general election.

It is also possible that changes in the nature of music production itself may have influenced the nature of popular music criticism within this period, certainly Petridis (p. 36) was keen to suggest that the 1980s witnessed the increased over-production of pop which resulted in debased approaches to criticism. Music production techniques moved on apace during this period with music sampling opening up production possibilities to a new strain of music makers and fuelling the rise of hip hop music, creating a new body of musical material requiring expert criticism. Similarly, technological advancements in recording techniques and the success of production teams like Stock, Aitken Waterman arguably resulted in new and more technically precise sounds, thus changing the substance of some of the products which critics were expected to assess.

The rapid growth of music television and increased emphasis upon music video during this period, with videos aired weekly in UK media formats such as *Top of the Pops*, perhaps also played its role in influencing broadsheet music coverage. This new emphasis upon the appearance of musicians, with artists perhaps achieving record signings increasingly not only for their musical talent but also for their image and marketing potential, seems likely to correspond with the accounts of those classical music journalists who recalled a boom in media coverage of artists like Vanessa Mae and Nigel Kennedy. Similarly, the same way that Gelly argued that certain music was excluded from broadsheet which did not fit into one of the predetermined genre headings provided by music marketing agencies, it is possible that artists themselves did not achieve record deals unless they reinforced these categories musically and visually, again potentially limiting the scope for broadsheet music coverage. With the chart success of artists becoming more tightly associated with their image, broadsheets' ability to publish large colour photographs of artists would have secured their role in the complex milieu of the music industry at that time. Collectively, these shifts within the wider music media must have necessitated timely responses from broadsheet arts editors, and certainly a break from tradition, in order to remain competitive if not to simply survive.

Finally, it is perhaps necessary to consider how the various perspectives upon broadsheet music writing between 1981 and 1991 may have been influenced by issues of generational difference. Both the secondary literature and the interviews have revealed perspectives which were blatantly associated with the generational values of the individual author or speaker (e.g. Gelly p. 153, Jewell p. 24). The various struggles, disappointments and differences of opinion between proprietors, editors, critics and readers would undoubtedly have been imbued with the values, expectations, tastes and notions of 'good' music and 'quality' criticism accepted by the different generations of each. This study has actively sought out the perspectives of journalists from a given era and it is perhaps not surprising that so many of their accounts expressed discomfort in relation to emerging trends and lamented a previous era in which their work had seemed less encumbered by the requirements of new generations

of editors. Had this study explored the expectations and values of broadsheet readers themselves, it may have emerged that the newly installed generation of editors were simply reinventing the nature of music coverage to suit what they knew to be the needs and expectations of readers of their own generation which, in light of the wider media developments outlined above, may indeed have included a desire for more accessible writing, increased popular music coverage, larger glossy images which replicated the new glossy magazines of the 1980s and a need for brief and authoritative modes of consumer guidance.

6.4 Negativity

Having considered the evidence for change and the multitude of possible causes, it seems pertinent to consider the journalists' personal evaluations of the developments which they witnessed and experienced first-hand during the period 1981-1991. In doing so what cannot be ignored is that in expressing their views and recollections, the changes which interviewees recounted were predominantly perceived, both at the time of their occurrence during the 1980s and at the time of interview when reflecting back, in a negative light, with narratives of decline in abundance; such a profuse sense of negativity appears not to have been reported in relation to US criticism and may therefore be symptomatic of some unique feature of English criticism. Typically, critics venerated the superiority of classical and rock music writing from the 1970s and agreed that the changes which occurred during the period examined marked the end of a golden age, resulting in broadsheet music coverage becoming increasingly bland and superficial (as shown for example in section 5.2.6), thus echoing Larkin's fears (p. 19) that by the 1980s certain areas of music criticism had become farcical. By redirecting the target audience for broadsheet music writing away from the specialist reader towards a larger more casual readership, the resulting requirement for more accessible articles, no longer necessarily written by a small elite group of long-standing staff authors, was deemed to mark the beginning of a degradation in critical standards. Furthermore, for many journalists, the move away from overnight concert reviewing and the increased demand for feature and preview writing affirmed that broadsheet music coverage was no longer to be treated as news but rather as magazine-style writing, suggesting that Murdoch's assertion to his staff that *The Times* newspaper constituted a component in the entertainment business (p. 43) signalled perhaps an era in which broadsheet newspapers repositioned their relationship with the entertainment industry.

The journalists' sentiments of a lost golden age and their concern for the alleged deterioration in critical standards invites the consideration of these research results within the context of two longstanding oppositional critical positions, namely the rejection or celebration of popular culture (summarised in Appendix JJJ). Almost all interviewees, with the possible exception of Clive Davis, appeared to oppose what they considered to be an increasingly populist stance to broadsheet music criticism and as such upheld the views and fears most often associated with the work of Leavis, who in 1930 argued that whilst "culture has always been in minority keeping",²⁸² this elite minority

²⁸² Leavis, Frank: *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, p. 25.

appeared to be under threat, that culture was “at a crisis”²⁸³ and that processes of standardisation would prompt a general “levelling down”²⁸⁴, thanks in particular to the emergence of the machine and new technologies. This anti-populist stance was also evident in the work of Adorno who argued that popular music, characterised by standardisation, acted as little more than “social cement”²⁸⁵ helping to maintain and extend capitalist society.

The populist stance, rejected by most interviewees, is perhaps best represented by the work of Williams who, by the early 1950s, proposed a more inclusive and diverse view of culture, arguing that a shift in attitudes towards such inclusivity would occur gradually and naturally, a process which he called the “long revolution”.²⁸⁶ Similarly, in 1985, Kerman suggested that musicology should no longer focus upon historical texts but instead encompass “contemporary musical life... (including its)...social use and value”²⁸⁷ and incorporate a more ethnomusicological approach. By the early 1990s and in conceiving his theory of postmodernism, Jameson, a further key exponent of the populist stance, argued that “if the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant (or hegemonic) ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm”,²⁸⁸ and suggested that attempts to understand and define popular ‘culture’ had come to incorporate a more inclusive collection of the cultural meaning systems and practices within a given culture, rather than simply the most elite cultural manifestations. For Jameson postmodernism was characterised by a range of features, including a blurring of the boundaries between high and low art, depthlessness, increased technologisation and the coexistence of a pastiche of sub features. In light of Jameson’s perspective, it is perhaps arguable then that many features of the shifting approaches to broadsheet music journalism in the 1980s evidenced here could be interpreted as symptoms or reflections of the postmodern condition; the close proximity of music reviews from a broad range of genres and entertainment guides addressing music, arts and media subjects in equal measure might represent a pastiche approach to arts coverage, and the adoption of new newspaper production technology appears to have been highly significant. Equally, the brevity of music reviews, the adoption of an accessible language and the avoidance of excessive technical terminology might point towards a degree of depthlessness, whilst a blurring of the boundaries between high and low art might be evidenced through the lost hegemonic status of classical music coverage and growth of ‘world music’ coverage.

It is perhaps easy to see why the journalists included in this study may, with the benefit of hindsight, have so keenly considered these developments in a negative light, given the nature of music coverage in the quality press two decades after the period being examined. By looking subjectively at a small but more recent selection of the same broadsheet publications included in this study (see Appendix KKK) evidence suggests that many of the changes identified in this study persist, if not have become

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁸⁵ Adorno, Theodor: “On Popular Music”, p. 305.

²⁸⁶ Williams, Raymond: *The Long Revolution*, p. 383.

²⁸⁷ Kerman, Joseph: *Musicology*, p. 37.

²⁸⁸ Jameson, *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 19.

more exaggerated. There remains an ongoing proliferation of supplements and separate themed sections, including sizeable entertainment guides divided into genre-based categories with sections such as 'Critic's Choice' (a heading first observed in the database constructed for this study in *The Guardian* in 1989), "The hottest downloads" and the best "Must-have reissue"²⁸⁹ demonstrating the ongoing emphasis on the reader as a consumer. Whilst reviews are far from extinct they remain relatively brief, are often presented *en-masse* and are frequently and blatantly linked to forthcoming events, album releases, downloads, artists' websites alongside the details of direct order routes. The proliferation of rating systems continues to suggest the redundancy of serious critical content in favour of consumer guidance, and the editorial predilection for feature-writing reported by interviewees continues unabashed. Popular music related material continues to routinely occupy significant page space and the positioning of such coverage suggests that the reformed hierarchy of the broadsheet arts page prevails, whilst the often wide ranging genre coverage demonstrates that it is not only rock music which has become increasingly commonplace. Given that many of these developments appear to have germinated within the period examined here it is perhaps easy to understand how this arguably inferior state of affairs could be attributed to the editorial mindset inherited from the latter 1980s.

If popular music, and its broadsheet coverage, has indeed come to serve as social cement this might suggest that the changes which occurred in the 1980s have resulted in a generation of acquiescent music journalists acting as little more than labourers placing down layer upon layer of standardised bricks in the construction of a sprawling yet characterless future. One interviewee's sense of *The Times* newspaper acting as a 'voracious machine' (p. 186) might indeed evoke fears that any scope for critical excellence within the broadsheet press has been lost to a state of affairs whereby music writers act as Orwellian-style workers merely churning out words for some analogous Department of Communication – each stuck in their own box, with little interpersonal contact and receiving instructions through a slot in the wall, albeit in electronic form.²⁹⁰

However, it is perhaps useful to question this overwhelming sense of gloom and to evaluate whether in fact there might be scope for viewing this period as one in which new approaches were tried and tested in search of newness and progress. In considering the consequences of the changes identified, the adoption of a populist stance, such as that proposed by Williams, Kerman and Jameson makes it possible to argue that the developments identified in this research may actually have fostered at least some change for the better; music writers were able to introduce music to a larger audience, inform readers of its facts and contexts and provide value judgements which might have guided them through the expansive range of performances and commercially available recordings occupying their environment. From an economic perspective, such change could undoubtedly be viewed as positive since the broadsheets' involvement in constructing and maintaining popular music tastes maximises the efficiency of the processes of production and consumption and has perhaps therefore aided

²⁸⁹ *The Sunday Times* (2009) 1/3/09 "Culture" supplement.

²⁹⁰ Orwell, George: 1984, p. 44.

audience satisfaction. Therefore, even if many consider that any actual progress has yet to be achieved, or any viable new path to have been found, the very fact that it can be sought, benefiting from reflection upon the knowledge and experience gleaned from the period examined here, might perhaps instead be valued and nurtured by those still interested in its discovery. Indeed the search may appear stuck or to have become temporarily sidetracked for a period of time, however a state of permanence should perhaps not automatically be assumed.

6.5 Constraints, limitations and areas for further examination

This work has highlighted several opportunities for further investigation which might provide invaluable insights into the history of English broadsheet music journalism from 1980 onwards. In particular it would be advantageous to expand the collection of personal narratives gathered by conducting additional interviews not only with music journalists but also with those Arts Editors responsible for determining music content and whose recruitment and employment practices have influenced the attitudes and critical freedom of music writers. Equally, narratives providing industry perspectives from the newspaper proprietors themselves, public relations representatives and even musicians who have received broadsheet attention might also help construct a more detailed and in-depth understanding of the mechanisms which have shaped broadsheet music writing since 1980.

The vast amount of interview material gathered for the purpose of this study would undoubtedly benefit from additional critical analysis, which might address additional themes, and much might be gained from follow-up dialogue with interviewees in order to further explore the countless issues which emerged during interview which were not central to the topic of this study, such as the female experience of broadsheet music writing, the struggle to establish a consistent lexicon for jazz writing, and the skills, experience and education required in order to become a broadsheet music critic. The word limitations placed upon this thesis have resulted in the relegation of many interesting and valuable journalist interview excerpts to the Appendices which might otherwise have added weight to the arguments presented here, not least by virtue of their volume, although the most pertinent quotations have been carefully selected to ensure that the overriding sentiments of interviewees have been represented in the main body of this thesis.

A further opportunity to enhance our understanding of the changes observed here might be achieved through widening the sample groups of newspapers included, whether that be through examination of additional publication titles, additional months of the year or by broadening the sample articles subjected to detailed content analysis. In light of the material gathered in the interviews it is arguable that benefit could be gained from adding further categories within the database to distinguish between album, single and concert reviews, and in the latter case highlight overnight reviews, in order to observe the changing fortunes of each. The content analysis itself might also benefit from greater scrutiny through the application of a formal critical discourse analysis approach, in order to gain an understanding of the socio-cultural and political bias contained within the texts themselves.

In view of the time constraints of this research, no attempt has been made here to understand or analyse reader responses to music criticism in the broadsheet press during this period. The complex nature of such a study placed it beyond the scope of this thesis, however research in this area would provide a valuable understanding of the way in which present-day readers negotiate meaning and value from the music-related discourse presented in the broadsheet press.

6.6 Conclusion

This thesis has presented a structured critical investigation into a topic which has to date existed primarily as anecdotal evidence and which until now has not received any substantial quantification or qualification through specific reference to the broadsheet publications or broadsheet music journalists themselves. This research has uncovered the field of music in the broadsheet press, as opposed to the specialist music press, and having considered a sample of broadsheet newspapers from 2009 to show its ongoing relevance, this work may contribute to future debate on the position of music in British national culture. Both the sizeable database which records and classifies many thousands of broadsheet music articles from the 1980s, which has been presented here, itself potentially serving as a starting point for future research in this area, and the large body of invaluable interview material which has captured the personal insights and experiences of many of the most prolific broadsheet music writers, from the same decade, provide further opportunities for detailed formal analysis. This work has also provided a template by which the content of music articles might be analysed in order to understand a range of technical elements and cultural insights embedded within their construction and has also provided an entry point for any future research into the employment conditions of broadsheet music journalists.

Overwhelmingly, the evidence gathered for this thesis has indicated that a seed for change was sown during the period examined here. An abundance of original evidence has been presented which demonstrates that during the 1980s criticism aimed at the musically informed reader became increasingly curtailed in favour of more accessible content, alongside a greater emphasis upon consumer guidance. During this period the strategic aims of broadsheets and music industry public relations departments, the former with increasingly commercially astute editors, merged in such a way as to reconfigure long established modes of music coverage, aided and abetted by technological developments within an unstable newspaper and magazine publishing environment, fashioned by the political climate of the time. It was certainly clear to all interviewees that a chain of events during the 1980s inspired the transformation of broadsheet music coverage, and indeed, as seen above (section 6.4), evidence abounds to demonstrate that many of the developments which occurred in this period have become entrenched in approaches to broadsheet music coverage nearly thirty years on.

This research has also highlighted the relative ease with which many music journalists were appointed and the harsh employment conditions in which they operated. The processes by which these music journalists were afforded space within the nation's broadsheet press, and thus given the privilege of

becoming some of the nation's key musical informants and leading critical voices, and the often isolated conditions in which they functioned, might raise a number of issues worthy of further examination, particularly in light of the power and control which they wield over consumer spending and opinion. This research by no means intends to criticise the work of its participant journalists but instead contemplates the alternative outcomes had 'best practice' recruitment and employment models been adopted. Furthermore, by putting in place measures which physically and spiritually distanced music journalists from their respective publications, broadsheet editors may have prevented the development of a more fruitful approach to broadsheet music coverage.

Whilst changes in production and consumption may have challenged the way in which popular music is considered, moving away from a previously 'low' art status towards a position which invites serious artistic criticism in some circles at least, its expanding coverage in the broadsheet press might equally be attributable to a 'dumbing down' of the broadsheets as a result of their shifting position from news providers, aiming at an elite audience, to entertainment publications with glossy magazine-style content, aimed at a broader readership; therefore, any degradation in critical writing might derive, at least in part, to the increasingly ephemeral nature of the publications it resides within. The use of improved production technology, made possible after the Wapping Dispute, has certainly contributed to the changed appearance and content of the broadsheet press, which has arguably resulted in broadsheets becoming cultural commodities in their own right. Such characteristics might therefore support Jameson's conception of postmodernism, and the developments within the broadsheet press detailed in this research might also represent necessary components in Williams' "long revolution".²⁹¹

Whilst Frith and Savage clearly felt the need to rescue popular music journalism from the populists, there are perhaps some advantages, to the advancement of musical knowledge, in having the stances adopted by journalists and academics, and the various subgroups within each, operate in tension. This tension is perhaps a means by which a sense of balance is maintained, since each group of professionals necessarily functions within the boundaries of their own spheres, with each compensating for those areas of criticism which the other does not offer, for example by providing impartiality or value judgements. As such, whilst it is clear that journalists and academics continue to adopt a very different lexicon for the discussion of music, the desire to achieve greater synthesis might not necessarily be desirable. In this sense, the evidence for change gathered here may contribute to future discussions which attempt to determine appropriate modes of discourse for the different arena in which critical evaluations of cultural material reside.

The database analysis conducted here has provided evidence to support many of the interviewees' personal accounts of shifting approaches to music coverage which, in line with several authors' views outlined in Chapter 1, resulted in allegations of a lost golden age; indeed the heightened marriage of broadsheet music writing and the processes of music consumption may have undermined critics' freedom to adopt a more critical style of writing. With the benefit of a modern-day perspective, it

²⁹¹ Williams, Raymond: *The Long Revolution*, p. 383.

might be easy to understand why many of the findings of this research, principally the decline of the think piece in favour of preview and feature articles, reductions in article length requirements relating to critical writing, the upheaval of the long-standing genre hierarchy in favour of popular music, the standardisation of production techniques and the adoption of a more accessible language, might instil within some a sense of alarm, as indeed seemed to be the case with many of the journalists interviewed here. Whilst there may have been benefits in tailoring music writing to a wider audience, the avoidance of technical musical terminology in broadsheet publications may have incubated a sense that popular music, along with other music genres, was no longer worthy of serious writing. As such, it might be easy to assume that Leavis' fears of a general "levelling down"²⁹² began to materialise within the period examined and that there is no way out of the current situation; broadsheet music criticism, it might seem, remains helplessly at the mercy of the music and publishing industries, at least until a dramatic shift in political ideology occurs.

Given the extent and potential influence of its circulation, regardless of its dwindling readership and increased competition from web-based sources of music criticism and consumer guidance, the quality press, and the music journalism which inhabits its pages, still represents an important cultural area of activity. Indeed, during the period October 2008 to September 2009 the National Readership Survey reported a collective estimated average readership figure of 5.8 million per issue for quality daily newspapers (Monday to Saturday editions) and 6.8 million for quality Sunday newspapers, representing an estimated 11.8% and 13.9% of the population aged 15+ respectively (Appendix A). Thus, where major changes have been proven to occur, as suggested within this thesis, it must surely be important to have in place some mechanism by which it is possible to scrutinise and monitor the extent of any change.

If the developments in broadsheet music coverage identified here are to be considered as detrimental, this thesis perhaps highlights the benefits which may be gained from developing new strategies, such as the creation of a formal catalogue of English broadsheet music criticism, or at least samples of it, which might allow those concerned with restoring the superior approaches, which many have associated with past practices, with a basis for exploring and understanding what may have been lost; only then perhaps will it be possible to navigate a way forward for the benefit of all concerned. The evidence provided in this investigation has certainly highlighted a need for further exploration in order truly to understand how the changes to broadsheet music coverage which began to occur in the 1980s have influenced broadsheet music journalism to the present day, and leaves us questioning whether the public, as readers and consumers, are, as a consequence of those changes, being deprived of a more valuable understanding of the musical landscape. Ultimately then, it is intended that this thesis may provide a significant contribution to the study of English broadsheet music journalism and stimulate further examination of this subject as an important area of academic inquiry.

²⁹² Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

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**Transforming Music Criticism? An Examination of Changes in Music
Journalism in the English Broadsheet Press from 1981 to 1991.**

Jennifer Skellington

Oxford Brookes University

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 2010

Volume 2 of 3

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**Average Issue Readership:
Selected Daily Morning and Evening Newspapers
January to December 1981 - 1990, and October 2008 to September 2009**

Adults
Total

	January 1981 - December 1981	January 1982 - December 1982	January 1983 - December 1983	January 1984 - December 1984	January 1985 - December 1985	January 1986 - December 1986	January 1987 - December 1987	January 1988 - December 1988	January 1989 - December 1989	January 1990 - December 1990	October 2008 - September 2009
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE	28,768	28,604	28,915	27,541	27,410	27,426	28,500	29,489	27,431	26,192	37,223
EST. POPULATION 15+ (000s)	43,150,000	43,300,000	43,650,000	44,100,000	44,300,000	44,525,000	44,775,000	45,100,000	45,200,000	45,200,000	49,465,000
Daily (Quality) Morning Newspapers	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)	(000s)
The Daily Telegraph	3,322	3,357	3,322	2,966	2,903	2,852	2,765	2,745	2,493	2,342	1,834
The Times	859	900	993	1,128	1,381	1,249	1,213	1,123	1,097	1,159	1,802
The Guardian	1,310	1,385	1,462	1,524	1,513	1,460	1,465	1,338	1,279	1,316	1,142
Financial Times	645	705	762	663	733	736	757	753	702	694	433
The Independent (from 1987)							912	1,078	1,156	1,104	636
Total	6,136	6,347	6,539	6,281	6,530	6,297	7,112	5,959	5,571	5,511	5,847
Daily (Tabloid) Morning Newspapers											
The Sun	11,590	12,619	12,696	11,985	11,706	11,396	11,340	11,258	10,791	10,220	7,798
Daily Mirror	10,500	10,431	10,272	10,026	9,270	8,936	9,062	8,725	8,845	8,694	3,477
Daily Express	6,101	5,766	5,500	5,160	4,973	4,509	4,306	4,282	3,900	3,857	1,598
Daily Mail	5,225	5,389	5,311	5,091	4,854	4,721	4,531	4,307	4,349	4,213	4,936
Daily Star	4,538	4,563	4,625	4,417	4,222	4,271	3,920	3,308	2,655	2,760	1,546
Total	37,954	38,768	38,404	36,679	35,025	33,833	33,159	31,880	30,540	29,744	19,355
Sunday Newspapers											
The Sunday Times	4,099	3,700	3,586	3,759	4,081	3,468	3,641	3,795	3,638	3,499	3,231
The Sunday Telegraph	2,630	2,304	2,092	2,334	2,409	2,250	2,163	2,326	1,964	1,913	1,662
The Observer	2,908	2,575	2,207	2,335	2,377	2,352	2,344	2,092	2,208	1,833	1,335
The Indep' on Sunday (from 1990)										1,156	619
Total	9,637	8,579	7,885	8,428	8,867	8,070	8,148	8,213	7,810	8,401	6,847

Source: National Readership Surveys (JICNARS, 1981 - 1991) and www.nrs.co.uk/toplinereadership.html.

Summary of Publications Included in the Broadsheet Sample Group

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total		
Mar-81	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nc	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st															
The Times		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1																		24
The Guardian		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1																		24
The Observer	1							1							1							1																							4	
The Sunday Times	1							1							1							1																							4	
Total for 1981 =																																													56	

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Total
Mar-82	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nc	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	
The Times	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1					24
The Guardian	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1					24
The Observer							1							1							1							1				4
The Sunday Times							1							1							1							1				4
Total for 1982 =																															56	

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Total
Mar-83	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nc	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	
The Times	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1				24
The Guardian	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1				24
The Observer						1							1							1							1					4
The Sunday Times						1							1							1							1					4
Total for 1983 =																															56	

	Mar-87	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nc	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	Total				
		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday					
The Times			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1				24				
The Guardian			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1				24				
The Independent			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1				24				
The Observer		1							1							1							1										4				
The Sunday Times		1							1							1							1										4				
																																	Total for 1987 =				80

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Total	
	Mar-88	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nc	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	
The Times		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1				24	
The Guardian		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1				24	
The Independent		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1				24	
The Observer							1							1							1							1				4	
The Sunday Times							1							1							1							1				4	
																																Total for 1988 =	80

[illegible]

	Mar-90	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	Total
The Times		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Guardian		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Independent		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Observer					1							1							1	1													4
The Sunday Times					1							1							1	1													4
The Independent on Sunday					1							1							1	1													4
																																	84
																																	Total for 1990 =

	Mar-91	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	Total
The Times		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Guardian		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Independent		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
The Observer				1		1					1								1	1													4
The Sunday Times				1		1					1								1	1													4
The Independent on Sunday				1		1					1								1	1													4
																																	84
																																	Total for 1991 =
																																	Total editions included =
																																	744

Database Specification

Purpose of the research

To analyse quantitative and qualitative changes in music criticism in the English broadsheet press between 1981 – 1991.

Audience

The data will be held on a non-networked personal laptop computer (IBM ThinkPad) and the completed database made available to readers via a CD-Rom. Data will periodically be reviewed by other parties either electronically or in hard copy. There is a remote possibility of the data forming part of a larger database and/or being made available on the web at some future point.

Content

It is estimated that the database will need to hold at least 5,952 separate data records, calculated as follows:

<i>Publication title</i>	<i>Publication frequency</i>	<i>No' of March publications per year</i>	<i>No' of years</i>	<i>Total no' of broadsheets to be consulted</i>
<i>Observer</i>	Sunday only	4	11	44
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	Sunday only	4	11	44
<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	Sunday only	4	2	8
<i>The Guardian</i>	6 days p/week	24	11	264
<i>The Times</i>	6 days p/week	24	11	264
<i>The Independent</i>	6 days p/week	24	5	120

Total = 744 newspapers
x 8 entries each (estimated
average)

5952 records

The flexibility of additional space is also necessary (up to approximately 12,000) in the event that the average number of articles per publication is greater than 8, and to cater for additional publications which may be included later.

Data fields

The fields of data which the database would be required to hold are listed in the table below.

Level 1 data (not required for each manual entry, only to be completed for the first record in each set then duplicated over adjoining cells as necessary)	Type and size of data field
Publication title	Text (>20) Limited to a list of valid responses
Year	YYYY Limited to a list of valid responses
Day	Text (>9) Limited to a list of valid responses
Price	£0.00
Total pages	Numeric (>250)
Date	DD-MMM-YYYY
Level 2 data (required for each manual entry)	Type and size of data field
Section (if applicable)	Text (>30)
Subsection (if applicable)	Text (>30)
Page	Numeric (>200)
Author/s	Text (>40)
Article title	Text (>20)
Article sub-heading	Text (>100)
Editor's genre	Text (>16) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Classical, Early, Roots, Rock, Pop, Jazz, Contemporary, Crossover, ?, n/a, Other</i>
My genre	Text (>16) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Classical, Early, Roots, Rock, Pop, Jazz, Contemporary, Crossover, Contemporary-classical, ?, n/a, Other</i>
Performance mode	Text (>16) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Opera, Vocal, Orchestral, Chamber, Band Instrumental, Choral, Ballet, Musical Theatre, other, n/a, ?</i>

Article type	Text (>16) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Chart, Feature/Profile, Preview, Review, Competition/giveaway, Feature/Profile and Review, Preview & Review, Obituary, Advert, Event Guide, Other,</i>
Right or Left page	Text (>6) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Left, Right, Front, Back, Double.</i>
Position on page	Text (>20) Limited to a list of valid responses: <i>Top3rd, middle, bottom3rd, n/a, whole, upper 2/3rds, lower 2/3rds, top half, bottom half, left half, right half.</i>
Manual word count	Text or numeric (>5000)
Column width	Numeric (>100)
Number of lines	Numeric (>100)
Words per line	Numeric (>100)
Estimated word count	Numeric (>5000)
Picture	Y/N
Colour	BW/Colour/n/a
Picture/ advert width	Numeric (>100)
Picture/ advert height	Numeric (>100)
Picture/ advert area (cm2)	Numeric (>100)
Picture caption	Text (100)
Other information	Text (>200)

Required outputs

Lists, Reports, Charts and Calculations

Example reports to be drawn from the data:

- Report on individual journalists and their contributions (by publication AND/OR year AND/OR size of article AND/OR type of article AND/OR genre)
- Length of articles (per publication AND/OR per year AND/OR per genre AND/OR per type of article)

- Number of articles (per publication AND/OR per year AND/OR per genre AND/OR per type of article)
- Frequency of advertising (per publication AND/OR per year AND/OR per genre)
- Number of illustrations (per publication AND/OR per year AND/OR per genre AND/OR per type of article)

Example calculations to be applied to report results:

- % page space devoted to all genres, and article types
- Average article length, number of articles by type, per year, per journalist
- Count number of articles and illustrations (per journalist, per publication, per year, per genre, per type)

Constraints

- No funding available to purchase additional software
- The database must be set up within 1 month ideally, 2 months absolute maximum
- No potential legal constraints (a literature review revealed that the contents of the database would be exempt from the Data Protection Act (1998) since “there are still many categories that are specifically exempt from the Act. These include...records associated with journalism, literature and art; records associated with research, history and statistics”).²⁹³)

²⁹³ Warrender, Robert: *Databases*, p. 82.

Comparative Analysis of Potential Software Solutions Against Five Key Criteria

Key to scoring and fonts
 1 – 4 Limited suitability
 5 – 6 Suitable
 7 – 8 Strong suitability
 9 – 10 Excellent suitability

Advantages – non-italic
 Disadvantages – italic

1. Microsoft Access XP

1. Available & compatible with user's hardware at zero cost	2. Ease and speed of database creation	3. Ease and speed of use	4. Access to technical support	5. Flexibility to modify the database later on
Already installed on the user's hardware	<p><i>"if you need to set up a series of databases that work together for reporting purposes...then Access would be the better choice...If you need to set up just one database, or if the databases you intend to build are unrelated, Excel is far simpler to use than Access for most users".²⁹⁴</i></p> <p><i>"Not only must you think about how to categorise your data into tables and fields, you must also ... assign a data type to each field...(and determine)...how many characters will be allowed in a field".²⁹⁵</i></p>	<p><i>"The main advantage of a relational database is that it requires less repetition of data".²⁹⁶</i></p> <p><i>"Access allows you to design a query using ... a QBE grid...In effect, the QBE grid allows you to graphically design a query...use the QBE grid to ask for the data you want to see and Datasheet view to see the results".²⁹⁷</i></p> <p><i>"You can use a report to quickly view data from a table or query".²⁹⁸</i></p> <p>Access is a 'relational' database which "allows you to set up multiple databases that can be related to each other by one or more common fields".²⁹⁹</p> <p>The user would require significant training</p>	<i>Oxford Brookes University Computer Services Department has two Access database experts.³⁰⁰</i>	<p><i>"Since tables are used as the basis for queries, forms, and reports you will not only end up changing your table design but also the forms, queries, and reports those tables are based on...it can be done but its not easy!".³⁰¹</i></p> <p><i>"A major flaw found at the end of the design process means a lot of query, form, and report editing".³⁰²</i></p>
10	5	5	5	3

Total Score for Access = 28

²⁹⁴ Ulrich, Laurie: *How to Do Everything with Office XP*, p. 303.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³⁰⁰ <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/services/cs/WhoDoesWhat/WhoDoesWhat.doc>. Accessed 03/03/2005.

³⁰¹ Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 520.

2. Microsoft Excel XP

Already installed on the users hardware	<p>“if you need to set up a series of databases that work together for reporting purposes...then Access would be the better choice...If you need to set up just one database, or if the databases you intend to build are unrelated, Excel is far simpler to use than access for most users”.³⁰³</p> <p>Up to 65,536 individual rows of data can be held in Excel with up to 256 fields for each row.³⁰⁴</p> <p>Whilst Access is a tailor-made database package, it is more suitable for handling dynamic data, i.e. current data which requires regular updating, however where static data is involved, i.e. not constantly updated, a single database in Excel would be more suitable.³⁰⁵</p>	<p>“To speed your data entry, Excel’s AutoComplete feature will try to guess what you’re going to enter into cells in each field, based on previous entries in the field.”</p> <p>“Excel provides tools for sorting a database by a single field, or by several fields all at one time”.³⁰⁶</p> <p>“Sorting by more than one field allows you to place your list in groups of records, and have each of those groups in order as well...When a database is sorted, it can be turned into a Subtotal Report, which subtotals fields in a database, providing a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data”.³⁰⁷</p> <p>“There are several major chart types offered through Excel’s charting tools”.³⁰⁸</p> <p>“The process of building a chart is relatively simple”.³⁰⁹</p> <p>“While Access is touted as the database application within the Office Suite, Excel is a significant database tool in its own right. If you need to store anything in a lists...Excel is just what you need to quickly and easily maintain and manipulate your important data”.³¹⁰</p> <p><i>Excel can provide only a ‘flat-file’ database, named as such because “each database file has a single</i></p>	Oxford Brookes University Computer Services Department and the School of Humanities contain several sources of technical support for Microsoft Excel, including support from the ‘drop-in’ help desk, open daily. ³¹²	It is possible to “easily remove unwanted blank rows, add columns, and edit worksheet content”. ³¹³
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³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

³⁰⁵ Discussion with Advisor on Oxford Brookes University Computer Services Helpdesk, 21/02/05.

³⁰⁶ Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³¹² <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/services/cs/WhoDoesWhat/WhoDoesWhat.doc>. Accessed 03/03/2005.

³¹³ Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

		<i>dimension and doesn't connect to other databases, which would give it depth".³¹¹</i> User already Excel proficient		
10	9	9	9	10

Total Score for Excel = 47

Measures Taken to Prevent or Reduce Risk of Damage to the Database³¹⁴

Hardware or software failure or errors

- Data regularly backed up to disk to enable recovery of any damaged data if necessary.
- Data was stored in individual database spreadsheets, one for each publication, in order to reduce the risk of significant data loss in the event of one table becoming corrupt.

Concurrency errors

- Single user access only.

Deliberate damage

- Database password protected and kept in a secure private residence.
- Where the Database was temporarily unattended during visits to local archives the system was frozen and password protected.
- Anti-virus software was installed.

Data theft

- Password protection to prevent access to data in the event of hardware theft.
- Prior to publication the data was only shown to members of the research supervision team by hardcopies which were always retrieved afterwards.

User errors

- Data validation criteria were created for certain fields to restrict acceptable entries to those from a predetermined list of options. This ensured that an alert appeared if the user tried to enter an invalid value or if the cell was left blank.
- Excel's AutoComplete function helped reduce data entry errors by duplicating earlier entries within the field.
- When the databases were merged for analysis or reporting purposes the subtotals of data were carefully checked to ensure that no data had been lost during the copy and paste process.
- To avoid erroneous entries resulting from unnecessary duplication of data entry, certain data such as newspaper name, year, day, date, price and total pages, was only entered once and then copied down into the following cells as appropriate.
- Where specific editions were revisited, it was used as an opportunity to quality check the data entry against the content of the publication; and the date entered into an 'Audit date' field.

³¹⁴ Based upon a list of potential problems cited in Warrender, Robert: *Databases*, p. 83.

Data Input Rules

The following rules should apply during data entry:

- i) Where no music coverage is identified in any given publication, a row of data should be generated recording the publication title, year, day, price, total pages and date, and the caption 'No music coverage' should be entered in the 'Author' field. All other cells except those containing formulae should be left blank.
- ii) No cell should be left empty (except where 'no music coverage' is recorded). Values of 'n/a' or '0' should be entered as appropriate, with the exception of the manual word count column which should be left blank unless a manual word count exists (except for adverts where 'advertising space' should be entered).
- iii) Any entries in text fields which are not directly quoted from the newspaper should be contained within brackets.
- iv) 'Section', 'Subsection', 'Author', 'Article Title and 'Article subheading' should be derived directly from the publication. Where these do not exist 'n/a' should be recorded.
- v) Where the genre of an article is made clear by use of the headings, subheadings or text within the publication the article should *always* be classified accordingly in both the 'Editor's genre' and 'My genre' fields.
- vi) Where genre is not clearly indicated in headings, subheadings or the text, '?' should be entered in the 'Editors genre'. In such instances a subjective assessment of the genre should be entered in 'My genre'. Only the following entries are permitted in the genre columns: classical, early, roots, rock, pop, jazz, contemporary, contemporary classical, crossover, other, ?, n/a.
- vii) Where an article contains reference to music of more than one genre, multiple rows of data (as appropriate) should be generated to capture the details of each and the word count split between each genre.
- viii) Where it is not possible to assign an article to a particular genre category, one of the following entries should appear in the genre column/s, as appropriate:

? - Where the editor's genre is not clear, AND uncertainty exists as to an appropriate assessment of genre, it should be classified as '?' in the 'My genre' field, and a second opinion sought. Where a second opinion identifies the appropriate genre the '?' should be overtyped with the new information'.

Other - In the event that the music referred to in an article cannot be accommodated within one of the genre categories, or where a second opinion sought in relation to articles recorded as '?' fails to clarify the genre, then 'other' should be entered in both genre columns and an explanation given in the 'Other information field'. This genre classification should be used sparingly and always accompanied by explanatory notes in the 'Other information' field.

n/a - Where a genre is not specified by the Editor and an assignment of genre under 'My genre' would be inappropriate, irrelevant or both, 'n/a' should be entered in both genre fields. N/a is acceptable in relation to event guides as they are likely to contain reference to more than one genre and individual entries for their contents would be inappropriate.

- ix) Wherever possible, an indication of performance mode should be recorded according to whichever of the following distinctions most accurately reflects the main emphasis: opera, choral, vocal, orchestral, chamber, instrumental, band, musical theatre. If none of these options are appropriate then one of the following should be entered as appropriate:

Other - i.e. none of the above (details should be provided in the 'other information' column)

Mixed - where reference to more than one performance mode exists, and where the entry relates to multiple performance modes such as in event guides.

N/a - e.g. for reviews of recordings, event guides, adverts, competition/giveaways or in relation to articles not primarily concerned with any specific performance/s.

? - Where the performance mode is unclear or unknown then '?' should be entered and a second opinion sought. Where a second opinion identifies the appropriate performance mode, the '?' should be overtyped with the new information. In the event that the second opinion fails to clarify the performance mode the '?' should remain.

- x) 'Article type' should reflect the main thrust of the apparent purpose of the article.³¹⁵ Where the article cannot be classified as either advert, chart, competition/giveaway, event guide, preview, review, preview & review, feature/profile, feature/profile and preview, feature profile and review or obituary it should be recorded as 'other' and details should be provided in the 'other information' column.
- xi) Where possible, the genre and performance mode of adverts should be noted.
- xii) Position on page should indicate the approximate position of the article in relation to the other articles on the page. An article may be recorded as positioned on the 'right half' or 'left half' even where it does not occupy a full half page, e.g. it could occupy one column down the right or left half of the page. The page positioning of event guides, especially those attributed to named authors, may be recorded as 'middle' for convenience, (particularly when they recurrently encroach upon both the top and bottom columns of a page) as these entries will not be subject to analysis based upon page position.

³¹⁵ The article categories of feature/profile, preview, review and obituary were derived from discussions with a music journalist on 14.01.2005 which revealed that newspapers typically commission journalists to write one of these.

- xiii) The size of articles should be measured using an estimation of approximate word length.³¹⁶ When manually counting the number of words within an article, hyphenated words should be counted as two words, and whole words divided by a dash at the end of a line (to fit) counted as one. Numbers should also be counted as words so that '300' or '3' count as one word (i.e. distinguished by the space either side) but '4 0 4' count as three words because they are spaced as separate words). Titles should be excluded from manual word counts.
- xiv) Advertisements and pictures should be recorded as either colour or black and white in the 'Colour/bw' field and their measurements recorded in cm, rounded up or down to the nearest 0.5cm where necessary. Adverts appearing within an event guide need not be recorded separately.
- xv) The 'Picture caption' field should reflect the text accompanying any picture.
- xvi) Picture width and Picture height should be rounded up or down to the nearest 0.5 cm
- xvii) Where two or more pictures exist for one article, and one or more are in colour, 'colour' should be entered in the picture colour column, and any pictures which are black and white indicated as such in the additional information column (as 'bw').

³¹⁶ This approach derived from discussions with a music journalist on 14.01.2005 which revealed that journalists are usually commissioned to write articles of specified word length.

Retrospective Genre Changes to 'Contemporary Classical' Entries

Surname	First name
Berio	Luciano
Birtwistle	Harrison
Blake	David
Boulez	Pierre
Brown	Christopher
Cage	John
Cardew	Cornelius
Carter	Elliott
Davies	Peter Maxwell
Dodgson	Stephen
Dutilleux	Henri
Feldman	Morton
Ferneyhough	Brian
Goehr	Alexander
Harvey	Jonathan
Henze	Hans Werner
Johnston	Ben
Kagel	Mauricio
Knussen	Oliver
Ligeti	György
Lutoslawski	Witold
Lutyens	Elizabeth
Maconchy	Elizabeth
Martland	Steve
Maw	Nicholas
McCabe	John
Muldowney	Dominic
Musgrave	Thea
Penderecki	Krzysztof
Reich	Steve
Riley	Terry
Saxton	Robert
Schnittke	Alfred
Schurmann	Gerard
Simpson	Robert
Skempton	Howard
Stockhausen	Karlheinz
Tavener	John
Weir	Judith

Event Guide and Preview Classifications in *The Times*

For example, in 1982 *The Times* introduced a new Friday section titled 'Preview' (see example at Appendix I, Part 1), in which forthcoming events for particular genres were covered by named authors, the content of which were recorded as 'previews' and an estimated word count was generated for each. These continued to appear weekly until 1984 (although from 1983 to 1984 they appeared in Saturday editions), and in 1985 similar articles continued to appear each Saturday in 'The Times Saturday' section, but without the subheading of 'Preview'. In 1986, the same type of article appeared, again on Saturdays and with a named author for different genres, but under the new title of 'The Week Ahead'. These were initially recorded as previews however upon commencement of analysis it was noted that 'The Week Ahead' articles appeared in later years and had been recorded as event guides, because they had begun to increase in size and resemble factual listings in terms of their content and appearance. The articles titled 'The Week Ahead' in 1986 were therefore reclassified as event guides to improve consistency.

From 1987, a new daily section titled 'Times Information Service' appeared, again with named authors for particular genres, and which adopted a similar layout and style to the 'Preview' sections (recorded as previews) and 'The Week Ahead' (recorded as event guides) in the preceding years. However due to their increased size, and particularly their frequency, it was considered impractical to generate estimated word counts for these and hence they were recorded as event guides. From 1990, a new Wednesday section emerged called 'Preview' (see example at Appendix I, Part 2), again with genres attributed to named authors, which adopted a similar appearance to the earlier 'Times Information Service' articles (recorded as event guides). Despite the title 'Preview', it was decided that these entries should also be recorded as event guides, again primarily due to their size and also to maintain consistency with the 'Times Information Service' entries. However, in both the 'Times Information Service' and 'Preview' sections, wherever a particular forthcoming event had been singled out for more detailed coverage (indicated by a named author, usually accompanied by a picture, with different typesetting and layout) such articles were recorded as previews despite being situated among other articles classed as event guides.

Method for Estimating Word Counts

It was initially anticipated that article lengths would cluster at intervals of roughly 100, 50 or 25 words. As such, the word lengths of articles in the first newspaper examined (*The Observer*), were estimated using a selection of purpose-made paper templates. Each template reflected a given column width for a given year, and the length of each was established by counting the first 100 words of continuous text in at least three articles (excluding headings), usually the first three encountered at each width, and then marking the position of the final row, at which 100 words occurred, upon the template. By looking at the markings upon the template derived from counting the three articles, an approximate middle point was established which then served as the final 100 word marker to be used in subsequent estimates.

However, after manually counting the length of several *Observer* articles to validate this method, and shortly after commencing data entry for *The Independent on Sunday*, several limitations of the method became apparent. Firstly, articles did not conveniently extend to word lengths at intervals of 100, 50 and 25 and therefore estimating sizes between these figures was wholly subjective. Secondly, the number of standard column widths within each publication were far greater than anticipated, which resulted in the time-consuming creation of numerous templates for each year. Thirdly, the way in which a template was applied at column breaks also introduced scope for inaccuracies, even when small pencil marks were used as a reference point as these often created confusion and increased scope for error.

The initial response to these problems was to manually count a large number of articles, typically those of approximately 400 words or less for speed, so that almost a third (28%) of *The Observer* articles (excluding adverts, event guides, charts and competitions) could be deemed to have reasonably accurate word counts. In an attempt to achieve consistency, the manual word counting rules outlined in the data input rules were applied (see Appendix F, xiii). Comparisons of the estimated word counts for *The Observer* against the manual word counts revealed an average variance of 8.11%, and as this was deemed acceptable it was decided that the editions of *The Observer* already examined would not be revisited. However, since the process of manually counting words slowed down the data collection process considerably, and as a significant proportion of articles in *The Independent on Sunday* were more than 400 words long, the approaches used thus far did not offer a viable way forward.

After considering possible process improvements and alternative methods, it was decided that estimated word counts would instead be generated by counting, and then multiplying, the number of rows of text within each article by an average words per line (WPL) figure derived from a sample group from within each publication. In order to generate an average WPL figure, a sample of the

number of words per line needed to be extracted from the total population of articles. It was considered that whilst potentially the number of rows could be miscounted and calculations could be erroneous, on balance this method would reduce the scope for human error and would increase the transparency, and therefore reliability, of the estimates.

The application of this process to the remaining Sunday newspapers was achieved by recording the number of words in each of the first ten rows of text from three separate articles at each column width, again usually the first three encountered, and then dividing the total by thirty to achieve an average figure. The first ten rows were selected in order to try and ensure the inclusion of some lines with paragraph breaks, and a total of thirty rows per article was considered both manageable within the time available and also large enough to ensure a reasonable degree of accuracy. Where four or less articles appeared at a given column width the articles were manually counted in full since, although this would potentially mean that data for minority column widths would be more accurate than those for majority column widths, it was felt that it would be quicker to manually count these articles than generate average WPL figures. Rows including any unusual fonts or spacing were excluded. Where subsequent manual word counts revealed that an average WPL figure was consistently delivering estimates that were significantly inaccurate (by approximately ten to fifteen percent or more) then data from alternative source articles was used in order to generate a WPL figure which more accurately reflected the manual word counts. Although the selection of articles was not wholly random, therefore permitting bias, it was anticipated that this approach would enable the average WPL figure to be established early on so that word estimates for each article could be generated at the time of data collection.

After applying this method to the *Independent on Sunday* and the *Sunday Times*, over half (55%) of the *Independent on Sunday* articles and over a third (32%) of the *Sunday Times* articles (excluding adverts, event guides, competitions and giveaways) were manually counted (and again mostly the shorter articles for speed). Analysis of the estimated word counts for the *Independent on Sunday* was then undertaken which revealed that, of the random articles used during analysis, the average variance from the manual counts fell below 5%. Since so many articles had been counted in full, further analysis was undertaken whereby the manually counted articles were grouped according to column width, and the total number of words per article divided by the number of rows contained within each to provide an average number of words per line per article. An average of the averages was then extracted to reveal an overall average which again fell below 5% which was considered acceptable, however since the method using only 30 rows of data was significantly quicker to apply, and delivered only slightly less accurate results than the latter method, which incorporated many hundreds of rows of data, the former was considered to be an appropriate basis upon which word counts would be estimated for the remaining publications.³¹⁷ However, in light of the volume of data

³¹⁷ As only two full articles appeared in the *Independent Magazine* these were manually counted and not subject to the WPL method.

that would occur in the daily newspapers a more structured approach to the sampling method was sought.

After researching various types and methods of sampling, it was decided that one based upon probability theory would be most appropriate since it would allow generalisations to be drawn from the random sample which could be applied to the population from which it was derived. Bernard suggests that “Probability samples are representative of larger populations and they increase external validity in any study”,³¹⁸ and Bryman³¹⁹ points out that using probability or random sampling guards against human bias affecting the selection process, whilst Robson adds that “In probability sampling, statistical inferences about the population can be made from the responses of the sample”.³²⁰

Four possible types of probability sampling were initially considered, namely simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling and multistage cluster sampling. As the average number of words per line was likely to correlate to column width, i.e. the wider the column the greater the number of words each row could contain, and in order to take account of variations in typeface within each publication, stratified random sampling was considered most suitable. The data could easily be categorised into homogeneous sub-sets according to publication title and column width, hence ensuring that all subpopulations would be represented in the overall sample, and by taking random samples from each the precision of the average WPL figures would be increased as a result of reduced levels of within-group variance. Robson also points out that “(s)tratifed random sampling can be more efficient than simple random sampling, in the sense that, for a given sample size, the means of stratified samples are likely to be closer to the population mean”,³²¹ and Bryman corroborates this view, stating that “(i)f a stratified sample is selected, the standard error of the mean will be smaller because the variation between strata is essentially eliminated because the population will be accurately represented in the sample in terms of the stratification criterion or criteria employed. This consideration demonstrates the way in which stratification injects an extra increment of precision into the probability sampling process, since a possible source of sampling error is eliminated”.³²²

As the size of the sample frame was not known upon commencing data entry for the daily newspapers, calculation of an appropriate sample size had to be conducted retrospectively. In considering sample size, four factors were of particular significance. Firstly, the time involved in re-accessing the chosen number of articles. Secondly, since the sampling frame would be divided into homogeneous subsets the degree of variation within each sample group was anticipated to be relatively small. Thirdly, the quantitative results would form only one of three outcomes from the study (the other two being the qualitative analysis of articles and the interviews with journalists) and

³¹⁸ Bernard, Russell: *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, p. 147.

³¹⁹ Bryman, Alan: *Social Research Methods*, p. 88.

³²⁰ Robson, Colin: *Real World Research*, p. 261.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

³²² Bryman, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

the quantitative data would not be subject to expert or detailed statistical analysis. Finally, it was desired that accuracy levels (i.e. variance between estimated and manual word counts) should fall within the “so-called 5% confidence level, or 5% significance level (since) (b)y convention, this is a widely accepted cut-off level in social research”,³²³ and likewise, Clegg also suggests that “the lowest level of confidence which is acceptable to scientists is the 5%, or one-in-twenty level”.³²⁴ It was however recognised that this study was not scientific in nature and that whilst such precision would be desirable, average variance levels slightly above 5% could be tolerated.

In light of the considerations listed above, and in order to help identify an appropriate sample size, a copy of the database was created and the data relating to the daily newspapers was organised according to ‘article type’ so that entries for which word count estimates were not applicable (namely adverts, charts, competitions/giveaways, and event guides) could be removed. Once these had been deleted the resulting sample frame was then arranged according to publication title and column width (N.B articles containing two or more integral column widths were counted twice or as per the appropriate number of column widths recorded in each). Once arranged in this way, it was apparent that a total of forty four potential column width subsets existed (excluding articles classified as having no column width). Of these, a total of twenty four column widths applied to four or less articles, and as per the method adopted in the Sunday newspapers, these articles were counted in full, furthermore, accepting that errors in counting could occur, it would increase the sum total articles with higher accuracy levels.³²⁵ A total of twenty column width groups remained which were then treated as stratified sample groups.

Sampling theory suggests that when using random stratified sampling it is usual to have proportionate sampling (Robson)³²⁶ and that accuracy can be improved by increasing the number of unbiased samples.³²⁷ To establish the size of the proportionate sample to be taken from each of the twenty column width subsets, the time taken to access different numbers of articles was estimated. In order to balance these factors with practical considerations, a sample of 5% of the total sample frame, divided proportionately across each stratified sample group, was deemed appropriate (in reality, 5% of some of the sample groups resulted in sample sizes of less than 1, and in such instances the sample size was rounded up to 1 article). As per the method applied to the Sunday newspapers, the number of words per line in the first ten rows of data were counted.

The sample from each subset was selected by establishing the range of row numbers for the group within the database and then entering a table of random numbers (Appendix L) at a haphazardly

³²³ Punch, Keith: *Introduction to Social Research*, p. 134.

³²⁴ Clegg, Frances: *Simple Statistics*, p. 64.

³²⁵ Note that for pragmatic purposes, in a handful of cases, where these articles were excessively long, of poor reproduction quality on microfilm or where additional visits to archives would have been necessary, estimates have been generated by other means as detailed in the ‘other information’ column in the database.

³²⁶ Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

³²⁷ Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 97 and pp. 160-161.

chosen entry point (since Bernard³²⁸ points out that entering such a table at the same point each time would result in the sample ceasing to be random) and then using up to the last one, two or three digits (as appropriate) from each five digit number from random columns and rows within the table to identify row numbers from the sample frame. Where it was difficult to find four digit numbers occurring between sometimes very narrow ranges of row numbers, the stratified sample was allotted a number from one onwards so that lower numbers could be identified more easily. This ensured that each article within each stratified population had an equal chance of being selected, hence removing bias.

Once the average WPL figure had been calculated for each column width (shown as separate worksheets titled 'WPL for Dailies' and 'WPL for Sundays' within the main database document (Appendix J)) and then applied to the database it was necessary to check levels of accuracy. Due to the large amount of data, checking the equivalent of every fiftieth entry was considered appropriate and practical. This was achieved by dividing the number of relevant entries by fifty in order to establish a sample size of fifty one, this figure was then divided roughly proportionately between the stratified groups to ensure that at least one manual count existed for each subset. The manual word counts were then compared to the estimates in order to establish the average variance. Where initial indications revealed any variances of 20% or more the article was revisited and any error in the original column width measurement or number of rows was corrected. Once completed the levels of variance within the daily newspapers ranged from 0.97% to 9.51 % with an average variance of 4.44%. When added to the variance calculations undertaken for the Sunday newspapers the overall variance for both the Sunday and daily newspapers ranged from 0.97 to 12.16 with an overall estimated average of 5.41%.³²⁹ The mode, in whole numbers, was estimated to be 5%, and the median estimated to be 5.38%. These accuracy levels were considered appropriate and acceptable for the nature of this research.

During data analysis involving word counts, it was decided that all of the estimated word counts (where in existence) should be used, even where a manual, and therefore theoretically more accurate, word count existed (where estimates did not exist the manual count was used instead). This approach was preferred since it ensured that the accuracy rate of 5.41% could be applied to all of the analysis results, thereby ensuring that all results could consistently be stated as accurate, or inaccurate, to within 5.41% across all publications, years and column widths. The manual word counts had already served their purpose in constructing the accuracy levels of each estimated words per line figure for each column width, publication and year. The number of manual counts were not evenly spaced across genres, authors or publications and hence their use could have skewed the research results.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³²⁹ Note, this is an 'estimated' overall average variance because it derives from the average of all the average variances according to each column width for each publication, not the average variance between the manual and estimated word count for every article across all publications and column widths.

Furthermore, additional time would have been needed to overtype the estimated word counts with manual word counts where they existed.

In addition to proof reading each row and column of data upon completion of data entry, the need to subsequently revisit numerous articles, e.g. when manually counting, conducting qualitative analysis and when capturing data for WPL calculations, provided additional opportunities for data checking. Any additional full manual counts were tested against the estimated word counts and degrees of variance noted alongside the results gained from the original sample group, although these were listed separately and not included in overall accuracy figures.

The difficulties in accurately estimating word lengths have been detailed above, and despite efforts to increase reliability and validity it is inevitable that errors may have occurred at any point in the process. Even where articles have been manually counted in full this cannot indicate absolute accuracy, since human error during the counting process was always a risk, however the results indicate the findings likely to have been achieved had all articles been manually counted. Further attention to small differences in typeface and page layout were not possible given the time constraints of the project. Whilst the approaches adopted were not wholly scientific they have been carefully considered and subject to continuous improvement to maximise validity. It is acknowledged that in any data collection exercise on this scale, quality depends wholly upon the researcher's ability to accurately copy, classify, record and maintain data and as such human error may have occurred. The inherent limitations of applying generalisations from the sample group to the entire database have also been acknowledged. Had additional time or resources been available, further checking would have been possible, however for the duration of this project full advantage was taken of any opportunities to check data.

It should be noted that the process for estimating word counts was applied before some articles were reclassified as 'contemporary classical' which resulted in nine additional rows of data being generated from the previously completed database (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.2.e), and that the word counting estimates were not revisited in light of these minor changes.

Finally, had more time and greater financial and human resources been available, the database may have been designed in such a way as to enable the reproduction of each newspaper article (subject to obtaining the necessary copyright permissions for each article), which in turn would have enabled more accurate word lengths to be recorded through the use of automated word counting processes. However, given the resources available, the methods described above represent the authors' best attempts to provide accurate, reliable and transparent estimated article word lengths, as appropriate to the overall aims of this study.

Summary of Newspaper Articles (Live Reviews) for Qualitative Analysis - Selected by Random Sampling across all Years, Genres and Publications

1981	Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary classical	Rock and Pop	Jazz	Roots
<i>The Times</i>	RPO/ Weller. Festival Hall. Paul Griffiths. 16/3/81, p11	The Grateful Dead. Rainbow. Richard Williams. 24/3/1981, p9	Buddy Rich. Ronnie Scott's. Richard Williams. 26/3/81, p11	Crystal Gayle. Apollo Victoria. Richard Williams. 6/3/81, p9
<i>The Guardian</i>	Knussen/ Birtwistle. Round House/ Radio 3. Hugo Cole. 2/3/81, p9	Original Mirrors. Lyceum. Robin Denselow. 10/3/81, p9	Davis/ Edison. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. 17/3/81, p9	Japanese Music. Roundhouse. Hugo Cole. 16/3/81, p9
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	A new British masterpiece. Felix Aprahamian. 8/3/81, p39	Swinging it hot and blowing it cool. Derek Jewell. 15/3/81, p40	The return of a star from West Side Story. Derek Jewell. 22/3/81, p39	None available
<i>The Observer</i>	Forging a link with Van Gogh. Stephen Walsh. 8/3/81. p36	None available	None available	None available

1987	Classical	Rock and Pop	Jazz	Roots
<i>The Times</i>	Dresden Staatskap/ Davis. Festival Hall. Richard Morrison. 14/3/87, p43	Past Masters. The Icicle Works. Town and Country. David Sinclair. 7/3/1987, p43	None available - record reviews only	None available
<i>The Guardian</i>	Willcocks/ Bach Choir. Festival Hall. Edward Greenfield. 4/3/87, p26	Tom Verlaine. Town and Country. Mat Snow. 21/3/87, p12	Elvin Jones. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. 25/3/87, p26	Ben E. King. Palladium. Robin Denselow. 4/3/87, p26
<i>The Independent</i>	Mozart the classical. English Baroque Soloists/ St John's. Michael John White. 26/3/87, p14	None available - record reviews only	None available	None available
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	The liberating effect. Paul Driver on a week devoted to the work of Olivier Messiaen. 22/3/87, p50	Soul without heart. Robert Sandall on white sound. 22/3/87, p49	None available - record reviews only	None available
<i>The Observer</i>	Messiaen. Messiaen, Maconchy and Nigel Osborne. Peter Heyworth. 22/3/87, p25	Whoopin' and hollerin'. Los Lobos at the Town and Country Club. John Peel. 1/3/87, p27	Ellington over Tracey. Dave Gelly. 8/3/87, p22	None available - record reviews only

1991	Classical	Rock and Pop	Jazz	Roots
<i>The Times</i>	ECO/ Pinnock. Barbican Hall/ Radio 3. Hilary Finch. 12/3/91, p22	David Lee Roth. Wembley Arena. David Sinclair. 5/3/91, p18	Ken Peplowski. Pizza Express. Clive Davis. 4/3/91, p16	None available
<i>The Guardian</i>	RPO/ Del Mar. Festival Hall. Meirion Bowen. 9/3/91, p21	Jane's Addiction. Marquee. Adam Sweeting. 6/3/91, p36	Freddie Hubbard. Jazz Café. Ronald Atkins. 9/3/91, p21	Ami Koita. Ronnie Scott's. Robin Denselow. 12/3/91, p36
<i>The Independent</i>	Strength in Depth. Bach at St John's, Smith Square. Anthony Payne. 26/3/91, p14	Rug and roll. Freddie Jackson. Hammersmith Odeon. Lloyd Bradley. 7/3/91, p17	None available	None available
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	Plea for the planet. Paul Driver. 3/3/91, p5.5	An ageing audience with God. Patrick Stoddart. 10/3/91, p5.9	None available	None available
<i>The Observer</i>	None available - record reviews only	None available - record reviews only	None available - record reviews only	None available
<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	Juggled memories of knights past. Le Jongleur de Notre Dame. The Place. Michael John White. 24/3/1991. p22	Straight from the heart. Jimmy Somerville. Hammersmith Odeon. Ben Thompson. 24/3/91, p22	Only 1 entry. Moonstruck by a quiet original. Jimmy Giuffrè. Jazz Café. Richard Williams. 24/3/91, p22	None available

Interview Invitation Letter

Department of Music
School of Arts and Humanities
Richard Hamilton Building
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford
OX3 OBP
[DATE]

Dear [NAME]

I am a post-graduate (PhD) research student, at Oxford Brookes University, currently in the second year of a three year project examining English broadsheet music journalism during the 1980s.

During the first year of my research a database was constructed which now holds the details of nearly six thousand music-related articles and advertisements from a sample of broadsheet newspapers. My research indicates that you contributed a substantial number of music-related articles during this period, and I am therefore very keen to speak with you in person to include your experiences and views in my work.

I attach further details about my research, in line with the University's Research Ethics Committee requirements, and would be grateful if you would let me know, by [DATE], if you would be willing to meet with me at a location, date and time that is convenient for you. Should you accept this invitation, you will be asked to sign the attached consent form at the beginning of the interview.

As you are one of only fifteen potential participants, your involvement would make a significant contribution towards the success of this research project. Therefore, if you have any questions or wish to discuss this invitation further before making a decision please do not hesitate to contact me.

I enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your response, should you chose to reply by post, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Skellington

Enc.

Participant Information Sheet

1. Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

2. Study Title

Transforming Music Criticism? An examination of the changes in music journalism in the English broadsheet press from 1981 – 1991.

3. Purpose of the study

This study aims to reveal developments in the quantity and style of music criticism in the English broadsheet press between 1981-1991, and to understand those factors which contributed to any such developments. This research is being conducted over a three year period. During the first year a database was constructed which now holds the details of nearly six thousand music-related articles and advertisements from a sample of broadsheet newspapers. During the second year, interviews with approximately fifteen music journalists will be conducted in order to discuss the results gained from the database analysis and to understand how the political, industrial and employment climate may have affected broadsheet music journalism between 1981-1991. During year three, the research outcomes will be written-up within an appropriate critical framework and prepared for academic publication.

4. Why have you been chosen?

The database indicates that you contributed music-related articles to one or more of the English broadsheet newspapers included in this study between 1981 – 1991; the newspapers included are The Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, Observer, The Independent and The Independent on Sunday. Participants have been selected after considering the number of articles written (within the sample), the time span over which contributions appeared, genre coverage and gender.

By agreeing to participate in this study you are confirming that you fulfil the criteria above. Please contact the researcher as soon as possible if you do not fulfil the criteria or have any questions about your eligibility to participate (contact details are provided below).

5. Do you have to take part?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate. If you do decide to take part you should keep this information sheet. You will be asked to sign a consent form, although you are free to withdraw consent at any time without giving a reason, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

6. What will happen to you if you take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher, lasting approximately 2 hours, to discuss your experience of writing for the broadsheet press between 1981-1991. In order to ensure that your contribution is recorded fully and accurately, the interview will be audio taped and/or digitally recorded. Ahead of the interview you may be asked to provide some basic factual information, and you may be asked to respond to a limited number of additional questions by email after your interview, although such contact will be kept to an absolute minimum.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You may experience loss of earnings as a result of your participation in an interview. Unfortunately, no university funding exists to compensate for your time, and therefore participation is reliant upon goodwill. However, in order to minimise disruption to your personal and professional obligations, the interview is expected to last no longer than 2 hours, and will be conducted at a location and time agreed by both parties.

Some or all of your responses may be used in the published results. However, any information which you provide about your personal employment conditions will remain anonymous and you may also specify, during the interview, that any other specific response/s should remain anonymous. You may also choose to refrain from answering any questions where you foresee a risk associated with your response.

If you wish to discuss the above or have any additional concerns that you would like addressed before deciding whether to participate, please contact the researcher or research supervisor (see below for contact details).

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is anticipated that this research will result in a greater academic awareness of the history and importance of late twentieth century English broadsheet music journalism, and that it will encourage further academic interest and scholarly study as a result of its findings.

9. Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

It is anticipated that all participants will be named in the published results, and that responses will be attributed to individuals except for those relating to personal employment conditions, which will be anonymised. You may however request that your identity is not disclosed and that some or all of your responses are anonymised.

All information collected about you will be treated as strictly private and confidential until the results are published. However you should be aware that as the sample group of participants is relatively small it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity and/or confidentiality of participant identity, e.g. where you fall into a small subset of the sample group. If you agree to be named in this research, the

confidentiality of the information you provide can only be protected within the limitations of the law – i.e. it is possible for the data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professionals. All data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's policy of Academic Integrity and must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of the research project.

10. What will happen to the results of the study?

It is intended that the research results will be used in the publication of an academic PhD thesis (Doctoral degree) and also in any related publications. In the event that the research fails to satisfy the criteria required for a PhD, the results may instead be used in the submission of an MPhil (Masters degree) and related publications. Once the thesis has been published you may arrange access to view a copy by contacting Oxford Brookes University, Library Services.

11. Who is organising and funding the research

This research is being organised and conducted by Jennifer Skellington, a research student within the Music Department of the School of Arts and Humanities at Oxford Brookes University. The research is being funded by Oxford Brookes University.

12. Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

13. Contact for further information

Researcher

Jennifer Skellington
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Research Supervisor

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University Ethics Committee

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project please contact the Chair of the University's Research Ethics Committee at Oxford Brookes University at ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Oxford Brookes University

Main switchboard: 01865 741111 Website: www.brookes.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project:

Transforming Music Criticism? An examination of the changes in music journalism in the English broadsheet press from 1981 – 1991.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Jennifer Skellington, Department of Music, School of Arts & Humanities,
Richard Hamilton Building, Oxford Brookes University, Headington
Oxford, OX3 0BP

Please Initial Box

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, without giving reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I agree to the interview being audio taped and/or digitally recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I understand that I have the right to request that any or all of my responses are treated and published as anonymous, but understand that as the size of the sample group of participants is relatively small it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity/confidentiality of participant identity. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I understand that, if I agree to be a named participant in this research, that the confidentiality of the information I provide can only be protected within the limitations of the law – i.e. it is possible for the data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professionals. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Criticisms, Weaknesses and Limitations of Interviewing

Nature of Criticism/Weakness/Limitation	Measures to be taken to counteract the difficulty
<p>What is said in an interview may not necessarily represent the interviewees' actual experiences or actions in reality. Furthermore "Even when respondents tell you the absolute truth, as they see it, in response to your questions, there is still the question of whether the information they give you is accurate."³³⁰</p>	<p>Participants to be advised that their interview material would be used in a formal publication so as to help reduce the likelihood of distorted responses.</p> <p>Reference to be made to secondary sources.</p>
<p>"If an interviewer has little rapport, the respondent may be unwilling to answer questions or may cut the interview short. If the interviewer has too much rapport he or she may soon find themselves cast in the role of social worker or counsellor".³³¹</p>	<p>Information to be provided in letters to interviewees ahead of the interview itself explaining what would be required of them and how the data would be collected and used.</p> <p>Interviewer to strive to "remain objective, professional and detached yet relaxed and friendly".³³²</p>
<p>The existence of an unequal and unbalanced power relationship in which the researcher can define what is relevant or irrelevant.³³³</p> <p>Alternatively the interviewee or interviewer may perceive the interviewee in a stronger position of power, based on gender, race, class, personality, professional status etc.</p>	<p>Professional behaviours to be maintained throughout the interview in order to divert attention from personal characteristics.</p>
<p>Interpretation of meaning by the researcher, both during the interview and afterwards, may differ from the intended meaning.</p>	<p>The interviewer will seek clarification if any point seems unclear during the interview itself where necessary.</p> <p>Transcriptions to be distributed after the interview, and interviewees will be asked to check their content for clarity and intended meaning..</p>

³³⁰ Bernard, Russell: *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, p. 215.

³³¹ Gray, David: *Doing Research in the Real World*, p. 380.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Seale, Clive: *Researching Society and Culture*, p. 205.

Measures Taken to Enhance the Interviewer : Interviewee Relationship

Personal appearance

A smart casual appearance was adopted by the interviewer to reflect the non-corporate nature of the meetings whilst recognising the need to achieve credibility as a legitimate member of an academic institution. Arksey and Knight suggested that “(d)ress and personal appearance may affect an interview, in the sense that the interviewee may be assessing and making judgements about the (ability of the) interviewer on the basis of what they can see. The literature (Warren, 1998) is full of examples of research projects where investigators have adopted different kinds of dress and hair style in an attempt to establish rapport and gain acceptance”.³³⁴

Background knowledge

Each interview commenced with the provision of background details about the research and comments were added during interviews, where appropriate, to demonstrate background knowledge, since it has been suggested that “Demonstrating that you are knowledgeable about the area in which you are interviewing is valuable in two ways. First, you will have more credibility with the interviewee if you can demonstrate in your questions that you are familiar with the context of the study. This is particularly important when ‘interviewing up’, that is interviewing people higher in status than yourself. Secondly, there are implications in terms of the trustworthiness of the study. It is less likely that interviewees will try to be misleading or deceitful because they will fear being detected”.³³⁵

Trust and rapport

Arksey and Knight argued that “Fostering trust is a continuous process, but given that many interviews in small-scale research are ‘one-offs’ and completed within less than two hours, what happens in the opening stage is especially crucial to the success of what follows....Closing the interview appropriately is important. As well as saying ‘thank you’ for taking part, make sure you end on a positive note.”³³⁶ As such, careful attention was devoted to the introduction and close of each interview, referring to a set list of details about the interview and research as a whole and interviewees questions were responded to openly and honestly.

Self-disclosure

The interviewer “Researcher self-disclosure has been proposed as one way to foster trust...the obvious rule of thumb is to offer information if you think it will encourage trust and openness, but not if you think it will obstruct data collection”.³³⁷ Some self disclosure was therefore provided wherever sought.

³³⁴ Arksey, Hilary and Peter Knight: *Interviewing for Social Scientists*, p. 104.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Analysis Graphs Created But Not Cited in This Thesis

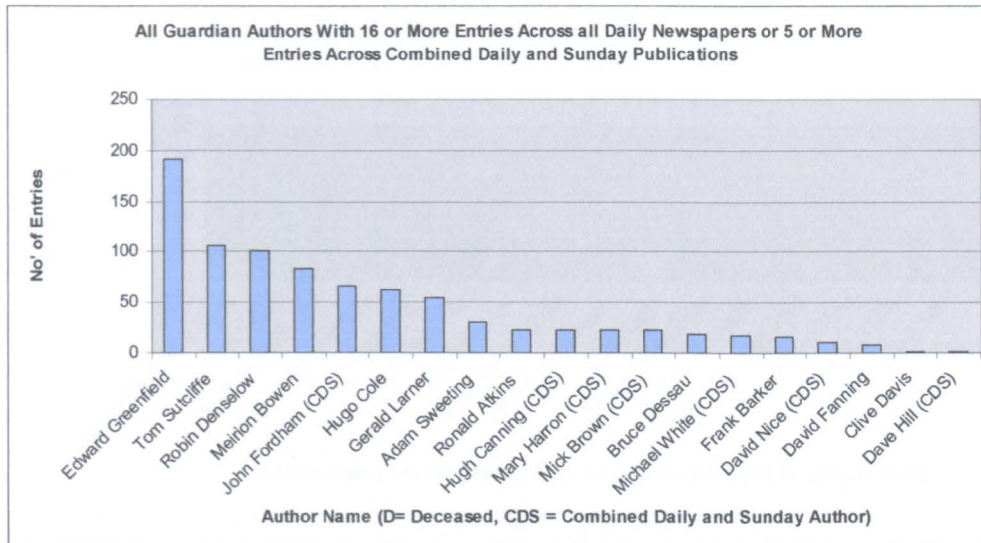
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Additional Graphs for Author Analysis

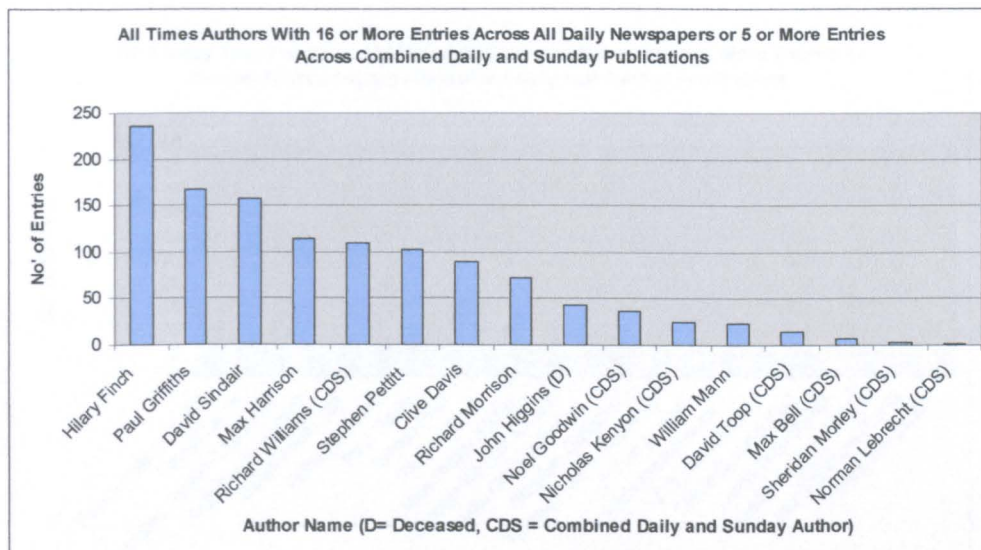
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3. All *Independent* Authors with Sixteen or More Entries Across all Daily Newspapers or Five or More Entries Across Combined Daily and Sunday Publications
4. All *Observer* and *Observer Magazine* Authors with Five or More Entries to Sunday Newspapers or Combined Daily and Sunday Publications
5. All *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Times Magazine* Authors with Five or More Entries to Sunday Newspapers or Combined Daily and Sunday Publications
6. All *Independent on Sunday* and *Independent on Sunday Magazine* Authors with Five or More Entries to Sunday Newspapers or Combined Daily and Sunday Publications
7. Authors with Two or More Classical Entries, by Publication
8. Authors with Two or More Contemporary Entries, by Publication
9. Authors with Two or More Contemporary-Classical Entries, by Publication
10. Authors with Two or More Crossover Entries, by Publication
11. Authors with Two or More Early Music Entries, by Publication
12. Authors with Two or More Jazz Entries, by Publication
13. Authors with Two or More Pop Entries, by Publication
14. Authors with Two or More Rock Entries, by Publication
15. Authors with Two or More Roots Entries, by Publication

Note: Entries where 'my genre' was recorded as 'n/a' were not converted into graphical format.

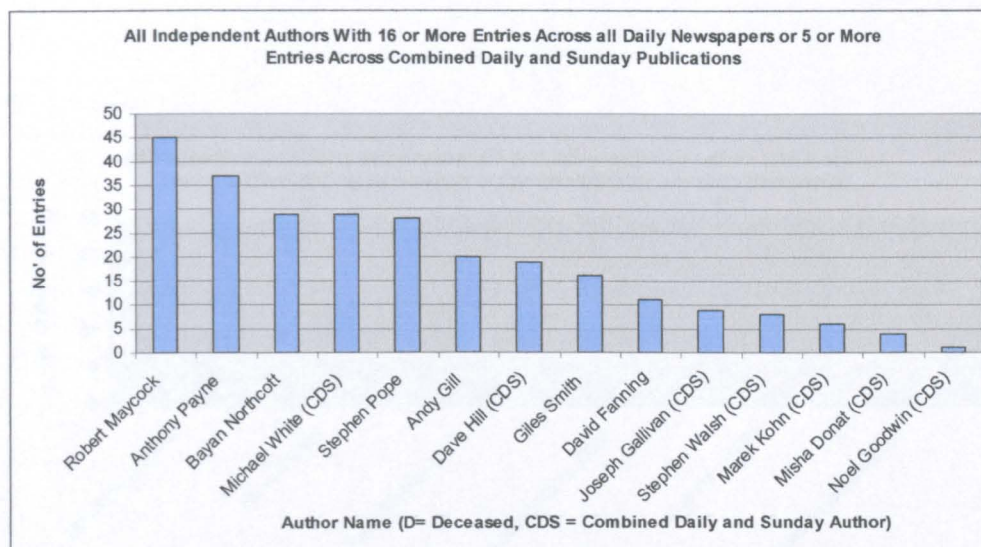
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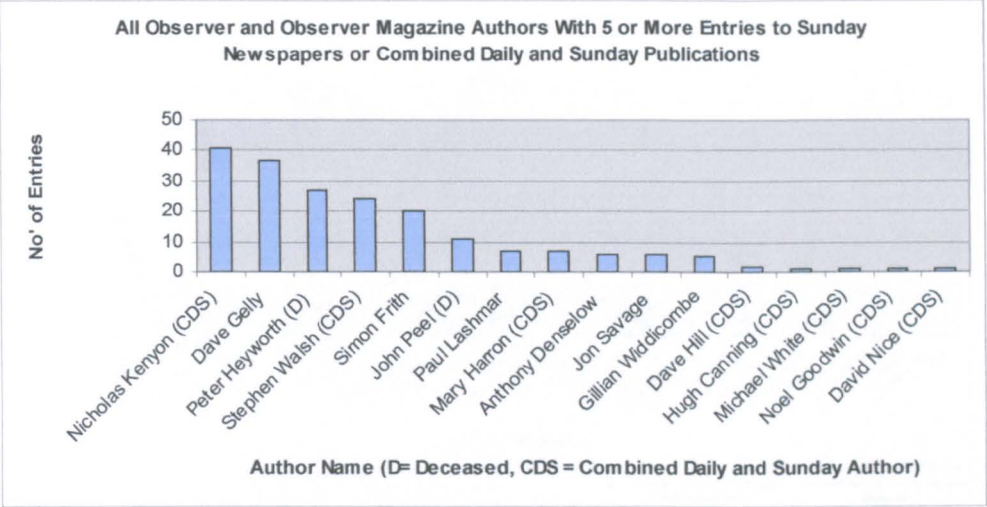
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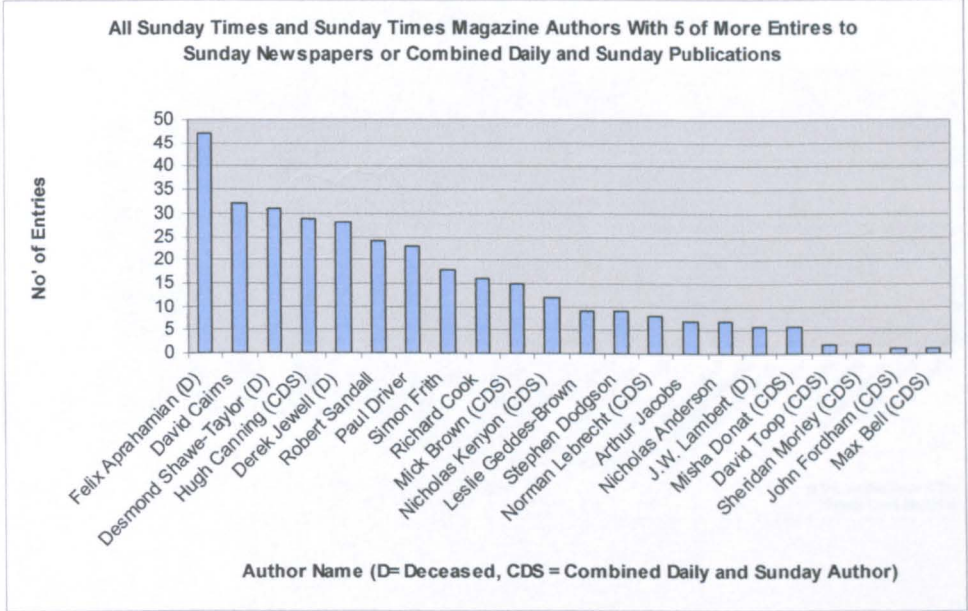
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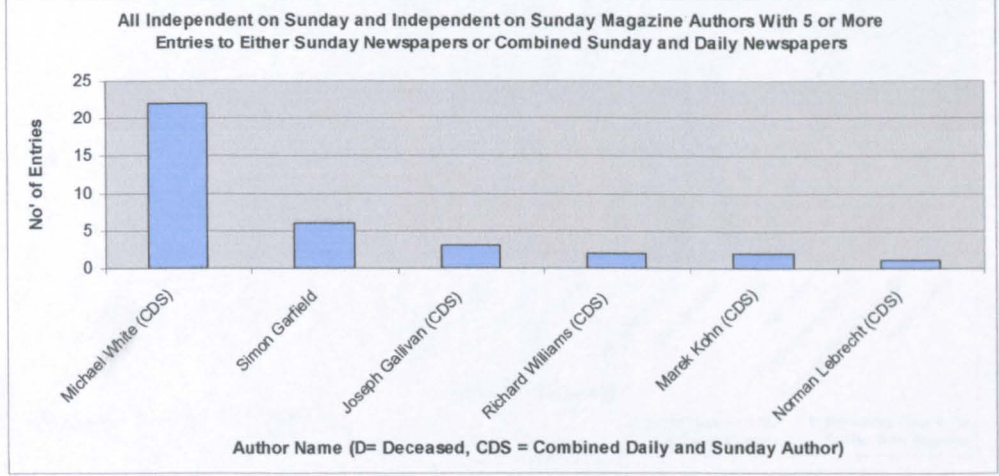
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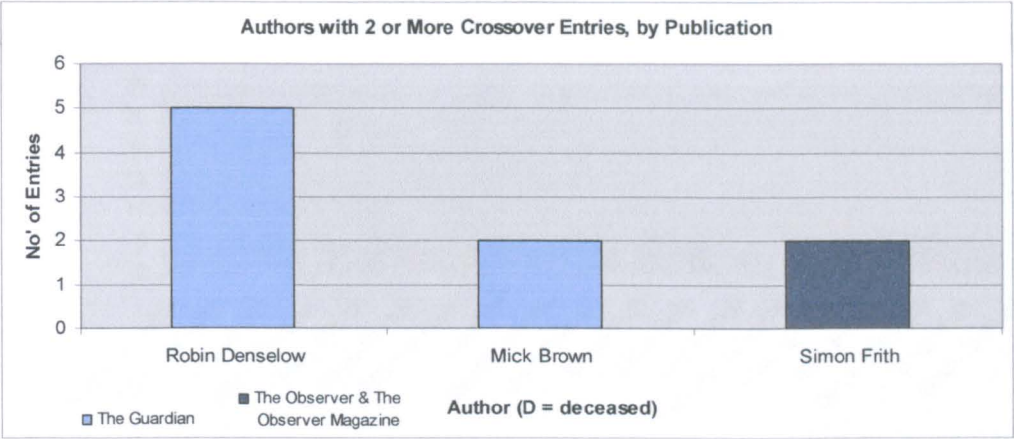
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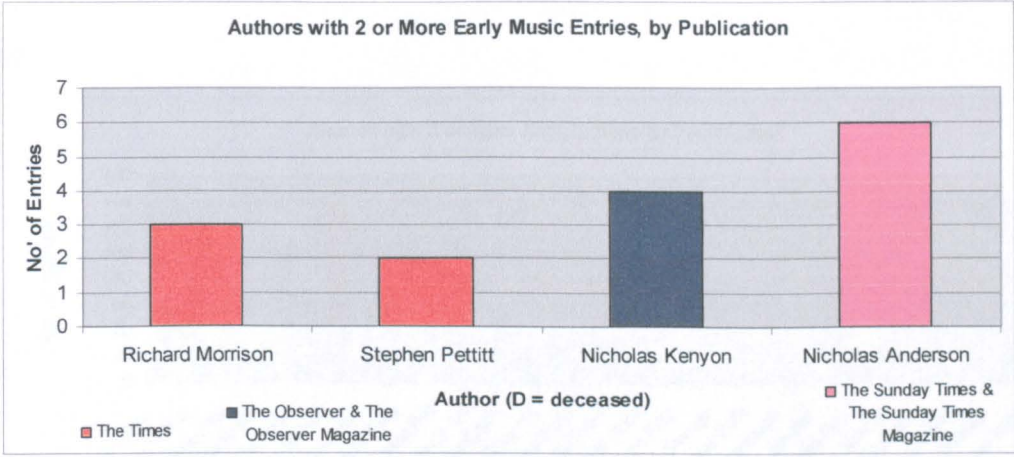
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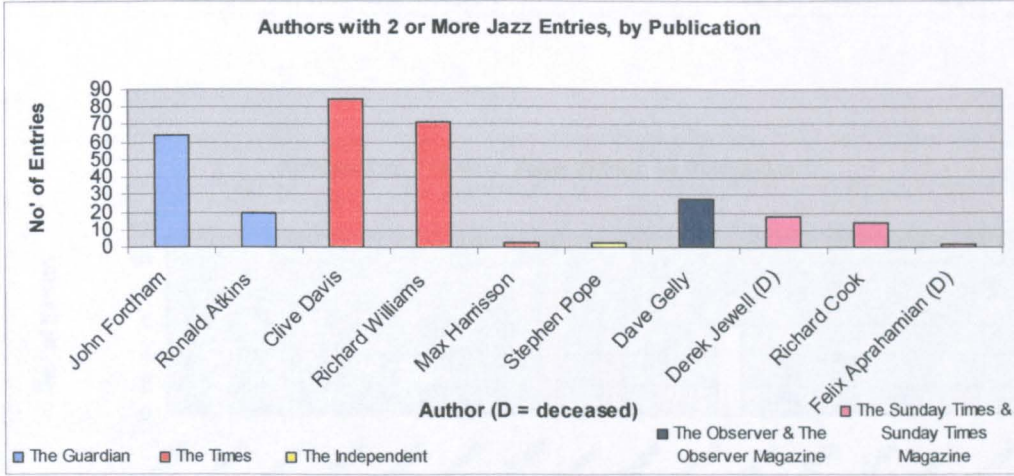
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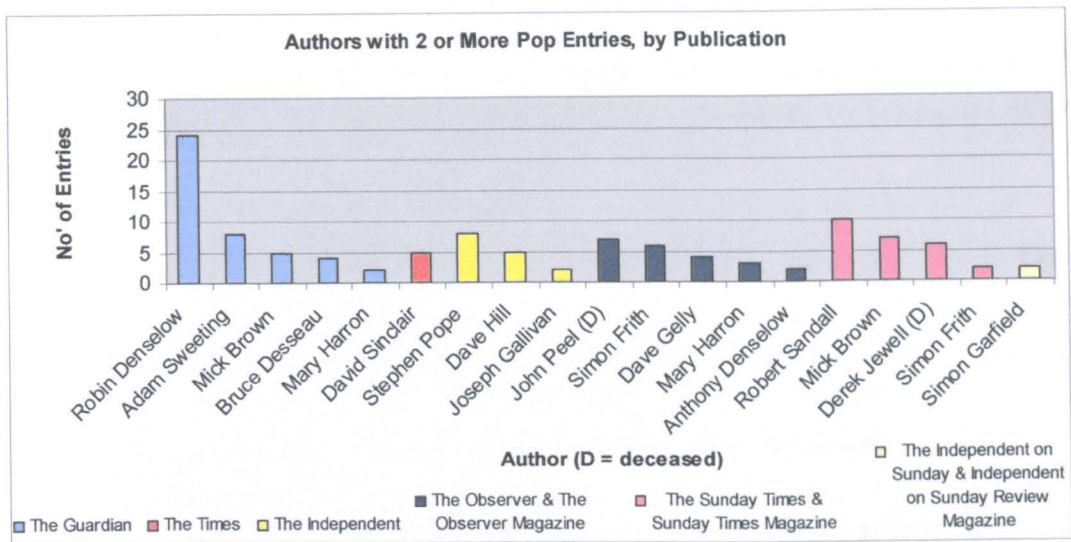
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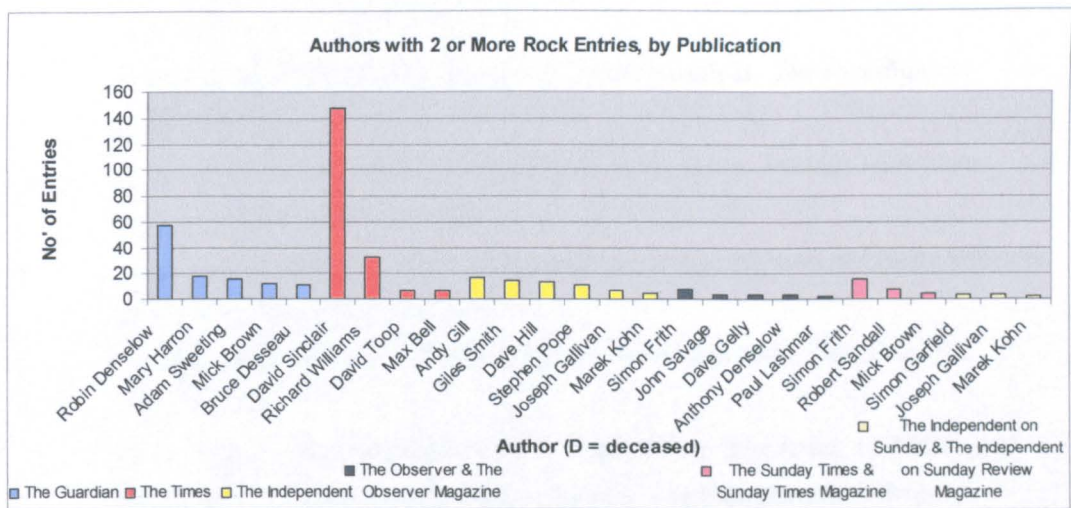
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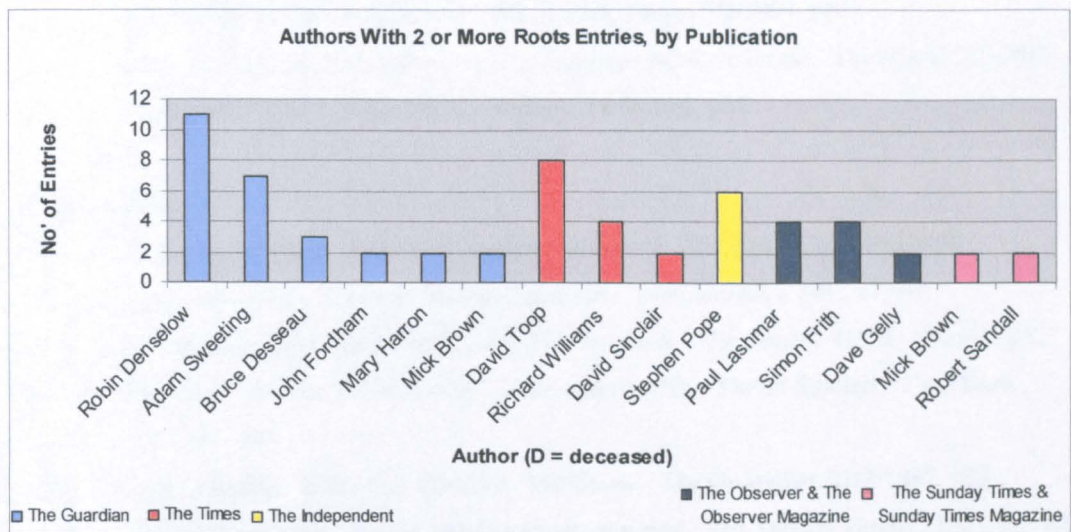
13.



14.



15.



Qualitative Analysis Tables with Index

(Note, the indexed table numbers shown below correspond with the associated article numbers listed in the index to Appendix V, so for example analysis table No. 1 at Appendix U corresponds with article No. 1 at Appendix V, and so on.)

Table No.	Article Title and Full Reference	Page/s
Classical, Early, Contemporary and Contemporary Classical		
1.	RPO/ Weller. Festival Hall. Paul Griffiths. <i>The Times</i> , 16/3/1981, p11	269
2.	Knussen/ Birtwistle. Round House/ Radio 3. Hugo Cole. <i>The Guardian</i> , 2/3/1981, p9	270
3.	A new British masterpiece. Felix Aprahamian. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 8/3/1981, p39	271
4.	Forging a link with Van Gogh. Stephen Walsh. <i>The Observer</i> , 8/3/1981, p36	272
5.	Dresden Staatskap/ Davis. Festival Hall. Richard Morrison. <i>The Times</i> , 14/3/1987, p43	273
6.	Willcocks/ Bach Choir. Festival Hall. Edward Greenfield. <i>The Guardian</i> , 4/3/1987, p26	274
7.	Mozart the classical. English Baroque Soloists/ St John's. Michael John White. <i>The Independent</i> , 26/3/1987, p14	275
8.	The liberating effect. Paul Driver on a week devoted to the work of Olivier Messiaen. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1987, p50	276-7
9.	Climbing to the summit of Mount Messiaen. Peter Heyworth. <i>The Observer</i> , 22/3/1987, p25	278-9
10.	ECO/ Pinnock. Barbican Hall/ Radio 3. Hilary Finch. <i>The Times</i> , 12/3/1991, p22	280
11.	RPO/ Del Mar. Festival Hall. Meirion Bowen. <i>The Guardian</i> , 9/3/1991, p21	281
12.	Strength in Depth. Bach at St John's, Smith Square. Anthony Payne. <i>The Independent</i> , 26/3/1991, p14	282
13.	Plea for the planet. Paul Driver. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 3/3/1991, p5.5	283-4
14.	Juggled memories of knights past. Le Jongleur de Notre Dame. The Place. Michael John White. <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	285
Rock and Pop		
15.	The Grateful Dead. Rainbow. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 24/3/1981, p9	286
16.	Original Mirrors. Lyceum. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 10/3/81, p9	287
17.	Swinging it hot and blowing it cool. Derek Jewell. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 15/3/81, p40	288
18.	Past Masters. The Icicle Works. Town and Country. David Sinclair. <i>The Times</i> , 7/3/1987, p43	289
19.	Tom Verlaine. Town and Country. Mat Snow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 21/3/1987, p12	290
20.	Soul without heart. Robert Sandall on white sound. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1987, p49	291
21.	Whoopin' and hollerin'. Los Lobos at the Town and Country Club. John Peel. <i>The Observer</i> , 1/3/1987, p27	292

22.	David Lee Roth. Wembley Arena. David Sinclair. <i>The Times</i> , 5/3/1991, p18	293
23.	Jane's Addiction. Marquee. Adam Sweeting. <i>The Guardian</i> , 6/3/1991, p36	294
24.	Rug and Roll. Freddie Jackson. Hammersmith Odeon. Lloyd Bradley. <i>The Independent</i> , 7/3/1991, p17	295
25.	An ageing audience with God. Pop. Patrick Stoddart. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 10/3/1991, p5.9	296
26.	Straight from the heart. Rock. Jimmy Sommerville. Hammersmith Odeon. Ben Thompson <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	297

Jazz

27.	Buddy Rich. Ronnie Scott's. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 26/3/1981, p11	298
28.	Davis/ Edison. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. <i>The Guardian</i> , 17/3/1981, p9	299
29.	The return of a star from West Side Story. Derek Jewell. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1981, p39	300
30.	Elvin Jones. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. <i>The Guardian</i> , 25/3/1987, p26	301
31.	Ellington over Tracey. Dave Gelly. <i>The Observer</i> , 8/3/1987, p22	302
32.	Ken Peplowski. Pizza Express. Clive Davis. <i>The Times</i> , 4/3/1991, p16	303
33.	Freddie Hubbard. Jazz Café. Ronald Atkins. <i>The Guardian</i> , 9/3/1991, p21	304
34.	Moonstruck by a quiet original. Jimmy Giuffre. Jazz Café. Richard Williams. <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	305

Roots

35.	Crystal Gayle. Apollo Victoria. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 6/3/1981, p9	306
36.	Japanese Music. Roundhouse. Hugo Cole. <i>The Guardian</i> , 16/3/1991, p9	307
37.	Ben E. King. Palladium. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 4/3/1987, p26	308
38.	Ami Koita. Ronnie Scott's. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 12/3/1991, p36	309

1. RPO/ Weller. Festival Hall. Paul Griffiths
The Times, 16/3/1981, p11

Technical and musicological terminology	[concert] [second piano concerto] [scoring] [solo] [accompaniment] [passages] [oboe] [cello] [chamber musician] [piano] [keyboard] [march] [Finale] [virtuosity] [upper register] [pedal resonance] [keys] [waltz] [the work] [symphony] [instrument] [orchestration] [woodwind] [keep exact time] [orchestra] [beat] [interpretation]
Background information	[<i>Prince Igor</i> , on which Rimsky had been working at the time]
Music referencing	a) [<i>Sheherezade</i>] [Walter Weller and the Royal Philharmonic] [<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>] [Liszt's second piano concerto] [Liszt] [Garrick Ohlsson's] [Finale] [Strauss] [Rimsky-Korsakov] b) [Rather as in Borodin's <i>Prince Igor</i>]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[It was not a night for musical exquisites. As if <i>Sheherezade</i> were not sufficient a feast of the flashy and showy for one programme, Walter Weller and the Royal Philharmonic chose to begin their concert yesterday evening with <i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>] [The Liszt was also welcome in other ways. It's scoring seemed a masterpiece of delicacy, and this was due not only to the context but also to Garrick Ohlsson's willingness to let the solo part become an accompaniment when necessary] [particularly in those passages where he was alone with an oboe or a cello, he showed the sensitivity of a chamber musician, though indeed there was a pleasant lack of egoism throughout his performance, a disinclination to accept the obvious role of piano chauvinist] [were not flashy, but tight, disciplined and thoroughly exhilarating] [and everywhere Mr Ohlsson did what he could to place his virtuosity at the service of purely musical brilliance] [Mr Weller also managed things of singular beauty where one might have thought the possibilities fairly limited] [and he did much the same in the Rimsky-Korsakov] [Without quite apologising for these pieces he kept them well under control, enough to remind one that <i>Sheherezade</i> is some kind of a symphony] [so that it sounds equally apt on every instrument in the book] [With so much scrutiny of the orchestration here it was a pity the woodwind could not always keep exact time, but in <i>Sheherezade</i> the entire orchestra was as one in following the precision of Mr Weller's beat and filling out the details of an interpretation that was as much edgy and severe as sumptuous]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[We certainly needed the lesson of Liszt's second piano concerto, played between these monsters, that the beautiful must invariably come with its own embarrassment of banality] [The grand charges up and down the keyboard] [The march of the Finale was cleaned of its strut] [producing marvels of starsounds in the upper register, shimmering effects of pedal resonance, and bursts of speed when his fingers danced over the keys in a haze] [as when he had a slow waltz echoing through deserted ballrooms at the start of the work] [and that <i>Till</i> is a tumbling inventory of ways to vary a scene] [the exotic became barbarous and bizarre: a pungent banquet, for once, instead of uninterrupted Turkish delight]
Other content	N/a

2. Knussen/ Birtwistle. Round House/ Radio 3. Hugo Cole
The Guardian, 2/3/1981, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[conducted] [players] [ensemble] [the work] [unison] [coda] [repertory piece] [rhythmic] [rhythmic conflicts] [un-conducted] [bass line] [double bass] [contra bassoon] [solos] [pianissimos] [operatic trio] [slow movement] [oboe, clarinet and basset horn]
Background information	[Oliver Knussen's <i>Coursing</i> has at last reached its final version] [... which followed, has become almost a repertory piece with the Sinfonietta] [(This was also the fourth performance of their current Arts Council tour)] [The problem of the bass line – double bass or contra bassoon?]
Music referencing	a) [Stravinsky's symphonies of wind instruments] [Andrew Pay] [Oliver Knussen's <i>Coursing</i>] [Birtwistle's <i>Silbury Air</i>] [the Sinfonietta] [Arts Council] [the Round House] [Mozart's B Flat Serenade for wind] [Janet Craxton] [slow movement for oboe, clarinet and basset horn] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Stravinsky's symphonies of wind instruments, as conducted by Andrew Pay, was interestingly humanised; perhaps because he allowed the players a good deal of latitude so that there was more give and take than usual in the ensemble] [This was a very different view of the work from that given by the same players under Simon Rattle last December; Stravinsky's ideal performance would perhaps have lain somewhere between the two, but both told us something about the work that Stravinsky might not have been able to tell us himself] [The music still divides and multiplies, rushing headlong from its unison opening on its exhilarating career – but who has time to come to terms with a work that flashes past at this rate?] [The new coda does, however, allow us time to get breath] [Anthony Pay coolly guided the players through its rhythmic intricacies in an assured, sharp-edged performance] [This work benefits from being heard at close quarters in the Round House, so that one experiences at full strength its savagery, rhythmic vitality, harsh and brilliant colouring] [Birtwistle's ear never seems to fail him] [We can hear into the centre of the music, rhythmic conflicts are not smudged or blurred but are transmuted at full strength] [After this, Mozart's B Flat Serenade for wind soothed and indulged us, played unconducted, as it always should be] [– was solved by using both, either playing along together companionably or sharing out solos appropriately] [Marvellous oboe solos from Janet Craxton, with the most gentle yet clear pianissimos] [The delectable operatic trio in the slow movement for oboe, clarinet and basset horn was also bewitchingly played]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[and feel regret, as we might when leaving a party of brilliant talkers] [One of those exhilarating, yet almost painful experiences, like a scrub with a scratchy loofah that one can hardly have too much of]
Other content	N/a

3. A new British masterpiece. Felix Aprahamian
The Sunday Times, 8/3/1981, p39

Technical and musicological terminology	[conducted] [mixed chorus] [instruments] [wind writing] [score] [concert repertoire] [prelude] [<i>a capella</i> chorus] [pulse] [instrumental] [players] [choral and orchestral groupings] [timbres] [semi-chorus] [laments and melismas] [soprano saxophone] [voices]
Background information	[Inscribed to John Lennon's memory and based on a short Alaskan Eskimo text]
Music referencing	a) [BBC series of College Concerts] [Guildhall School] [Michael Gielen] [BBC Forces] [Webern] ["Four Poems of Stefan George"] [Wolfgang Rihm's "Cuts and Dissolves"] [Jonathan Lloyd's "Towards the whitening dawn"] b) [John Lennon's]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[A modest but magical British masterpiece appeared last week amid the generally abysmal run of new works] [It came totally unexpectedly in the last of the BBC series of College Concerts at the Guildhall School on Wednesday when Michael Gielen also conducted BBC Forces in some Webern, his own "Four Poems of Stefan George" for mixed chorus and nineteen instruments – good wind writing but curious insensitivity to the texts - and Wolfgang Rihm's "Cuts and Dissolves," a horror of a score compounded of chaotic fragments] [a godsend maybe to Hammer Films of worse, but certainly not to the concert repertoire, not even Radio 3] [The positive impact was made by Jonathan Lloyd's "Towards the whitening dawn."] [it begins with an evocative prelude for <i>a capella</i> chorus] [Soon, in the same slow pulse, mysterious instrumental sounds are heard in the distance] [From the corridor outside, a file of players enter the hall in procession, and joins the chorus on the platform] [From then on, the interplay between the choral and orchestral groupings in complex but also exciting and exquisite, for Lloyd explores a wide range of timbres] [At the end, it is a semi-chorus that recedes in procession off the platform and into the distance to the music of the initial prelude plus the nostalgic laments and melismas of an offstage soprano saxophone set in relief against the disappearing voices] The element of movement is wholly justified, for its aural effect is spellbinding rather than speculative]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	[(Jonathan Lloyd is interviewed on page 41)]

4. Forging a link with Van Gogh. Stephen Walsh
The Observer, 8/3/1981, p36

Technical and musicological terminology	[works] [composer] [orchestral work] [concert] [score] [themes] [pivot notes] [sonorities] [feeling for line] [concertante] [cello and bass tone] [upper strings] [wind and percussion band]
Background information	[Major new works by Henri Dutilleux, the 65-year-old French composer, are a rare commodity but usually worth waiting for] [Composers like Dutilleux, who may take years to complete a score of this kind, are apt to work off much of their technical development at their desks] [Varese worked in a similar way, if with quite different results due to his taste for harsh and disordered sonorities] [Rostropovich has been connected with this work from the start]
Music referencing	a) [Henri Dutilleux] [Timbres, espace, mouvement] [Thursday's Festival Hall concert by the LPO under Rostropovich] b) [Ligeti] [Varese] [Like the Second Symphony and the Cello Concerto]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[and his new orchestral work...which had its British premiere in..., is no exception] [So Dutilleux has moved almost imperceptibly from a basically Roussellian, neo-classical Gallicism towards a radical posture not far removed from that of Ligeti: in fact a faint Ligetian character about the new work's title is borne out in the music, though Dutilleux always deals much more emphatically with recognisable themes than Ligeti] [In any case, 'Timbres espace, mouvement' is very French in tone] [The title connects it, Dutilleux tells us, to certain paintings of Van Gogh; but there is above all a French musical ancestry for Dutilleux's way of treating pivot notes and concentric fragments of a theme as the nucleus for dense complexes of sound] [In Dutilleux the aim is for a blended sound and the decorative aspects of his music are elegant rather than grotesque; moreover he displays the Frenchman's typically sensual feeling for line, and it's through line that 'Timbres espaces(*), mouvements' finally achieves and intensity of feeling that explains the link with Van Gogh] [and he conducted a performance that had real impact as well as, on the whole, balance and lucidity] [the new piece has a big concertante element; it uses cello and bass tone (without upper strings) as a sort of bonding agent for a large, volatile wind and percussion band, and the spatial tension and movement this gives is a crucial part of the whole design]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	N/a

*Error appears in original article.

5. Dresden Staatskap/ Davis. Festival Hall. Richard Morrison
The Times, 14/3/1987, p43

Technical and musicological terminology	[symphony] [bar] [conducted] [the finale] [orchestra] [movements] [strings] [choral] [coda] [soloists] [tuning] [score] [pacing] [counterpoint] [brass-section] [pick-ups]
Background information	N/a
Music referencing	a) [Beethoven's ninth symphony] [Sir Colin Davis] [Dresden Staatskapelle] ["Alle Menschen Werden Bruder"] [Schiller's] [London Symphony Chorus] [the Adagio] [(Karita Mattila, Alfreda Hodgson, Keith Lewis and Theo Adam)] [Scherzo] [the Trio] [The Finale] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[This glorious performance of Beethoven's ninth symphony – bereft of exaggeration or extravagance, exuding warmth and sanity from every bar – must rank among the finest concerts Sir Colin Davis has conducted in London] [It also emphasized the continuing excellence of the venerable Dresden Staatskapelle] [And, since "Alle Menschen Werden Bruder" in Schiller's vision, it was actually rather moving (for this naïve idealist anyway) that in the finale the East Germans should have formed so sonorous and unshakeable alliance with the London Symphony Chorus] [The orchestra, having played with massive security for three movements, their strings producing especially distinguished and unanimous lines in the Adagio, seemed to relish the southern, powerful input of vibrant choral sound: it appeared to renew them for delivery of a magnificently passionate coda] [Four soloists who took more than usual care over blend and tuning...did their share] [But it was essentially Davis's triumph] [No one has ever doubted his commitment to search without compromise for the truth of every score he conducts...here, though, he combined fidelity with rich imagination] [His pacing, particularly of the Adagio and Scherzo (with the Trio slowed to allow the wind players to impart a little noble rusticity to the counterpoint) was unerringly good; he found some admirably natural-sounding balances (despite a few shortcomings in a brass section), and his rapport with the orchestra was outstanding] [The Finale offered many instances of neat pick-ups and of subtle freezing agreed not just in principle but in considerable detail]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	N/a

6. Willcocks/ Bach Choir. Festival Hall. Edward Greenfield
The Guardian, 4/3/1987, p26

Technical and musicological terminology	[choir] [a measured andante] [tone] [tenth and last movement] [allegro] [a flowing 6/8] [march-like contralto solo] [sung] [soloists] [quartet] [top register] [tenor] [voice] [thick textures] [singers]
Background information	[It is a fair comment on Victorian taste that Dvorak's Sabat Mater rather than his characteristically Czech inspirations was what first won him a special place in this country] [The composer wrote it at a time when he had lost all three of his children, yet little of the pain of that tragedy is reflected in this unruffled setting of the Latin poem, inspiration for so many composers]
Music referencing	a) [Dvorak's Sabat Mater] [the Bach choir] [Sir David Willcocks] [Tui Nati Vulnerati] [Inflamatus] [Catherine Wyn-Rogers] [Eiddwen Harrhy's] [Arthur Davies] [Gwynne Howell] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Heard today, as it was in this devoted performance by the Bach choir under Sir David Willcocks, the disconcerting thing is how little there is in it of typical Dvorak] [even more disconcerting perhaps is how much of the piece flows at a measured andante] [The seeming absence of trouble must have comforted the Victorians but is dangerously sweet for our taste, and even in a performance as well gauged as this, with the Bach choir producing a bold range of tone, it was a great relief when finally in the tenth and last movement Dvorak at last allows himself a rip-roaring allegro] [Then you do finally get a Dvorakian involvement when this enduring optimist among composers tells himself to put the past behind him] [That moment came over all the more powerfully, since Sir David had rightly opted to give this 90-minute work without an interval, intensifying the experience] [Other passages to cherish were the child-like nursery rhyme settings in a flowery 6/8 of Tui Nati Vulnerati and the fine march-like contralto solo Inflamatus strongly sung by Catherine Wyn-Rogers] [With Sir David's Day at hand Welsh names were dominant among the soloists, a fine quartet] [Eiddwen Harrhy's bright, pure, silvery tone was well matched by the ringing top register of the tenor, Arthur Davies] [Gwynne Howell sang with satisfying firmness, and it was more Dvorak's fault than his that the voice was at times swallowed up in thick textures]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[What must it have been like, one wonders, when Dvorak himself conducted the Sabat Mater at the Royal Albert Hall with 700 singers in the choir?]
Other content	N/a

7. Mozart the classical. English Baroque Soloists/ St John's. Michael John White
The Independent, 26/3/1987, p14

Technical and musicological terminology	[authentic instrument performances] [orchestral] [symphony ensemble] [instrumental] [inner parts] [piano concertos] [soloist] [concerto instrument] [fortepiano] [keys] [andante] [notes] [legato phrasing] [slow movements] [decoration] [tone] [Steinway] [timbre] [rondo] [finale]
Background information	[The instruments were "authentic" including the concerto instrument which was a fortepiano modelled on Mozart's own, preserved in Salzburg] [Being a reproduction instrument, it has an agile mechanism and its keys acutely register differing weights of touch]
Music referencing	a) [John Eliot Gardiner's] [English Baroque Soloists] [St John's, Smith Square] [Mozart] [Symphony No 34] [K482 and K488] [Malcolm Bilson] [the "Hunting" rondo] [<i>La Chasse</i>] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[John Eliot Gardiner's direction of the English Baroque Soloists invariably falls into the preferred first category, and his concert on Tuesday at St John's, Smith Square was one of those rare occasions when you leave the hall with all defences lowered. It was a straightforward Mozart programme: the Symphony No 34, framed by two piano concertos, K482 and K488, in which Gardiner's current recording partner Malcolm Bilson was the soloist] [as the andante of K482 made very clear] [It also made clear its shortcomings: the sustaining power of single notes is cut short and the smooth flow of legato phrasing is accordingly disrupted] [Slow movements generally (and the adagio of K488 especially) sound spare, in need of decoration to extend the continuity of sound; at such moments the fuller tone of a Steinway seems a tempting alternative] [But given that Mozart was not writing for a Steinway, we must assume that his concertos exploit fully the limitations of the instrument he had available; and accounts like Bilson's show that despite the hollow timbre of the K488 adagio, it has a vulnerability which is peculiarly acknowledged in an authentic context] [Where Gardiner and Bilson score particularly, though, is in avoiding the extreme interpretative stances which often, in this genre of performance, go hand in hand with crude abrasive instrumental colouring. The "Hunting" rondo of the K482 finale was, by contrast, the epitome of refinement; an elegant description of <i>La Chasse</i>] [The textural sheen on the finale of the symphony was radiant with the sensibilities of the Enlightenment]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[At their best, authentic instrument performances are like having your ears syringed – unfamiliar sounds become brighter and communicate more precisely, familiar sounds acquire new colours as their constituent elements are thrown into relief and become identifiable for what they are] [In orchestral terms, it means taking apart the cohesive blend, the aural blur which is the feature of a modern symphony ensemble, and substituting for its rounded textures a collection of more hard-edged, individually assertive ones; so the instrumental balance reads quite differently and inner parts become exposed; thus a period performance can be cleansing and cathartic or an exercise in shock absorption] [Was Karajan in all his glory ever so enticingly Mozartian as this? I doubt it?]
Other content	N/a

8. The liberating effect. Paul Driver on a week devoted to the work of Olivier Messiaen
The Sunday Times, 22/3/1987, p50

Technical and musicological terminology	[works] [orchestral] [chorus] ["symphonic meditation"] [chorale harmony] [asymmetrical rhythms] [orchestration] [upper strings] [harmonic resonances] [wind instruments and metallic percussion] [Indian rhythms] [strokes of the tam-tam] [tonality] [strings] [gamelan] [concertino of percussion] [the key of A major]
Background information	[The RAM is developing a tradition of such works devoted to distinguished living composers – in previous years it has featured Tippett and Penderecki] [Messiaen's first published orchestral piece, <i>Les Offrandes oubliées</i> , composed in 1930] [The title – <i>Forgotten offerings</i> – refers to his own religious poem on which the piece is a "symphonic meditation", and specifically to Christ's blood spent on the Cross: "You love us, gentle Jesus, but we had forgotten it."] [...for Messiaen's subsequent work, almost all of which is specifically devotional and consequently poses a large problem for many listeners] [(Messiaen was 22 when he wrote it)] [The basic ingredients of his mature style are all here – the sonorous chorale harmony of the opening, the asymmetrical rhythms of the succeeding frenzy, the superb orchestration which allows him in the concluding slow meditation for upper strings to exploit all the extraneous harmonic resonances (the "partials") the simple archetypal forms] [<i>Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum</i> (1964) – a ritualistic and truly oracular work for wind instruments and metallic percussion] [Messiaen's imagination is profoundly eclectic – in the course of a lifetime he has incorporated diverse, unlikely elements into his style, but never actually changed it as many 20 th -century composers (Stravinsky the chief example) have done] [Messiaen – a modernist composer whose innovative techniques have had enormous influence – has never entirely abandoned tonality] [The <i>Trois petites liturgies</i> (1944) for female chorus, strings and a gamelan-like concertino of percussion, which formed part of Nicholas Cleobury's concert with the Sinfonia and Opera orchestras, do not ... quit the key of A major]
Music referencing	a) [Olivier Messiaen] [Royal Academy of Music] [<i>Des Canyons aux étoiles</i>] [St Pancras parish church] [Camden Festival's] [Repertory Orchestra] [Colin Metters] [<i>Les Offrandes oubliées</i>] [<i>Chronchromie</i> (1959)] [<i>Forgotten Offerings</i>] [<i>Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum</i> (1964)] [<i>The Trois petites liturgies</i> (1944)] [Nicholas Cleobury's] [Sinfonia and Opera Orchestras] b) [Tippett] [Penderecki] [Wagner] [grand guignol] [Stravinsky]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Olivier Messiaen was in London last week to attend a festival of his works at the Royal Academy of Music] [Altogether about 20 works by Messiaen were presented, most of them large-scale] [One of the largest of all – <i>Des Canyons aux étoiles</i> – was performed last night at St Pancras parish church and doubled as the Camden Festival's opening item] [The evening concerts at the start of the RAM festival included four orchestral works (one with a female chorus) by Messiaen spanning over 30 years of his career] [The second programme – performed by the Repertory Orchestra under Colin Metters – brought a welcome chance to hear ...] [It came as quite a surprise after the immense sophistication and avant-garderie of the previous night's performance of <i>Chronchromie</i> (1959)] [Here were some of Messiaen's basic and enduring ideas laid out simply in three clearly defined sections using a vocabulary which, though obviously related to his maturer language, also passingly evoked Wagner and sometimes even grand guignol] [This certainly sets the tone] [Yet the very fervour and literal-mindedness of Messiaen's religious inspiration have a musically liberating effect: he is induced to create the boldest, most vivid musical images, to build in simple, monumental blocks of sound, and to strike directly at the listeners' nervous system] [What, for the composer is pure symbology will often seems to the listener, whether devout or agnostic, more like hedonism] [<i>Les Offrandes</i> is an absolutely marvellous tyro piece] [– but the overall effect is touchingly gauche] [The piece has the early bloom of self-discovery] [It received a spirited, sensitive performance by the student players] [revealed a sensibility which has only become more extreme with

	time, more defiant, but has not fundamentally altered] [Et exspecto gave plentiful evidence of his interest in the transformation of Indian rhythms and birdsong] [And while the piece dares to shatter our eardrums with single vast strokes off the tam-tam, it also uses total silence to extraordinary advantage in the functional pauses of the second section] [But with what kaleidoscopic richness they stay there!]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	[(as Felix Aprahamian's programme note reminded us)]

9. Climbing to the summit of Mount Messiaen. Peter Heyworth
The Observer, 22/3/1987, p25

Technical and musicological terminology	[melodic] [harmonic] [orchestral] [central section] [piano] [timbres] [dynamics] [note values] [pitch] [serialism] [rhythms] [chant] [gongs] [cymbals] [operatic] [chords]
Background information	[as his eightieth year approaches] [In the past week The Royal Academy of Music has staged another of its admirable annual tributes to living composers] [But who, listening to the heavy, conventional orchestral writing of the central section, could suppose that within 20 years its composer would play an essential role in the emergence of a post-war avant garde?] [A small piano piece, composed in 1950 as a trial balloon, to demonstrate how timbres, dynamics and note values, as well as pitches, could all be used in a predetermined order, set his pupils, Boulez and Stockhausen, on the road to serialism] [Their explorations did not leave Messiaen himself untouched, as is most evident in 'Chronochromie' (1960)] [But it remains something of an isolated work in his output] [For the rest, Messiaen has gone his own way, concocting a wholly personal idiom out of a singularly improbable assembly of ingredients] [This eclecticism is a far cry from the intellectual austerity of serialism, which claimed to have consigned the past to the rubbish heap, and for a while Messiaen was mocked in progressive circles for his 'naivete'] [Yet he has outlived the experiments he inspired] [In recent years, Boulez (in 'Rituel') and Stockhausen in his operatic saga have both moved back into their former master's orbit, rather than vice versa] [not for nothing was the work performed as an Act of State in Chartres Cathedral in the presence of Charles de Gaulle]
Music referencing	a) [The Royal Academy of Music] [the Duke's Hall] [Messiaen] [Offrandes oubliées (1930)] ['Chronochromie' (1960)] ['Et expecto Resurrectionem mortuorum'] b) [Stravinsky's] [Debussy] [Boulez] [Stockhausen] ['Rituel'] [Chartres Cathedral] [Charles de Gaulle]
Reference to the audience	[as his bowed figure made its way to the platform to acknowledge thunderous applause with endearing diffidence]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[In the presence of the master himself and with a huge tricolour appropriately draped over the balcony of the Duke's Hall students have performed with astonishing conviction and technical assurance a substantial amount of the music Messiaen has composed over more than half a century] [The programmes were cleverly devised to set Messiaen's music in the context of its time and in doing so to illustrate his unique position as a crucial link between the worlds of Debussy and Stravinsky on the one hand and of Boulez and Stockhausen on the other] [In the very early Offrandes oubliées (1930) there are already traces of the melodic and harmonic identity that has since marked everything he has written, and the religious inspiration is also present] [I like its spiky tensions and intellectual intensity and, in particular, the way in which the implications of serialism here stretch Messiaen's rather inflexible harmonic formulas] [Stravinskian rhythms go hand in hand with religious chant, oriental gongs and cymbals with birdsong] [Everything that Messiaen composes has an overwhelming sense of personal identity, to a point where he has of late seemed to have become a prisoner of his own idiom] [As the years have gone by, the works have tended to become larger, but less different from one another] [The first signs of that process are evident in the monumental 'Et expecto Resurrectionem mortuorum'] [Here an element of public rhetoric intrudes:] [There are passages of hieratic grandeur]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Not many composers have mountains named after them] [But Mount Messiaen not only exists in Utah, where the birds seem to have sung with special eloquence, but aptly embodies the position this great man has come to occupy in the world of music] [I felt myself to be in the presence of history as not since Stravinsky's last visit to London more than 20 years ago] [A succession of massive and wonderfully built chords that stand like the pillars of a Romanesque cathedral bring the work to a deeply impressive conclusion] [Yet am I alone in experiencing

	a degree of impatience with all those declamatory gongs and pregnant silences?]
Other content	N/a

'offrandes oubliees' and 'Chronchromie' and 'Et expecto' all spelled differently in this and the preceding article as per original newspaper edition.

10. ECO/ Pinnock. Barbican Hall/ Radio 3. Hilary Finch
The Times, 12/3/1991, p22

Technical and musicological terminology	[violin] [viola] [oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn] [wind] [tempi] [baton] [Adagio] [Andante] [song] [movement] [dynamic level] [Concerto] [Flute] [Harp] [cadenza] [Andantino] [melody] [concertos] [symphonies] [crescendo] [harpsichord continuo] [aria]
Background information	[This week, according to the English Chamber Orchestra's Mozart calendar, is 1778, the year of the death of Rousseau, of Voltaire, and of Mozart's mother in Paris] [Because it was Paris, and they liked that sort of thing there, it is also the year and the week of the Sinfonie Concertante: tomorrow comes the violin and viola work, inspired by Parisian taste and written a year later, and on Sunday the programme offered the K297b for oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn] [An elegant virtuosity, a graciousness which would be reliably <i>petillant</i> , these were the expectations of the genre; and, for the earlier wind work at least, Mozart obliged] [Despite the mud flung up from both the Parisian pavements and churlish aristocracy, Gallic taste had to be pandered to yet again in the Concerto for Flute and Harp] ["Whether it will please I do not know! And to tell the truth, I care very little." Thus Mozart]
Music referencing	a) [English Chamber Orchestra's] [Sinfonie Concertante] [K297b for oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn] [Gordon Hunt, Thea King, Robin O'Neill and Frank Lloyd] [Trevor Pinnock's] [Adagio] [Concerto for Flute and Harp] [Pinnock, William Bennett and Marisa Robles] [Andantino] [K213c] [the "Paris" Symphony] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[His Adagio was, not surprisingly, a true Mozartian Andante, a lightly suspended song of a movement, each voice reticent in the low, even, dynamic level of its entry] [Pinnock, William Bennett and Marisa Robles gave it, almost mischievously, the sharp edge of their tongue, each cadenza dispatched with fiery brilliance, and any tempting bulge in the central Andantino smoothed out in order to maximise momentum from its melody] [The two concertos were framed by two symphonies] [The first was the tiny, Mannheim-born K213c, little more than an extended, three part crescendo with harpsichord continuo and a moment's aria thrown in for good measure: the second the "Paris" Symphony itself] [but Pinnock and his players clearly cared rather more, and although the opening Frenchified flourish was nicely underplayed, every second which followed was bright with taut, highly coloured articulation]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[whose lips were kept tingling and whose fingers were set pirouetting by the brisk tempi set by Trevor Pinnock's baton]
Other content	N/a

11. RPO/ Del Mar. Festival Hall. Meirion Bowen
The Guardian, 9/3/1991, p21

Technical and musicological terminology	[cellist's] [movement] [mini cadenza] [codas] [finale] [horns and woodwind] [conductor accompanists] [dynamic] [bowings] [horns' motif]
Background information	[Robert Cohen replaced Paul Tortelier (who died in December) at this Royal Philharmonic Orchestra concert, dedicated to the great cellist's memory]
Music referencing	a) [Robert Cohen] [Royal Philharmonic Orchestra] [Dvorak's Cello Concerto] [Dvorak] [Norman Del Mar] [Brahms] [Sibelius] [Sibelius' Fifth Symphony] b) [Paul Tortelier] [Wagner]
Reference to the audience	[The large audience wasn't slow to show its appreciation]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[and in Dvorak's Cello Concerto he managed to recapture some of the suppleness, delicacy and scintillation of the old master's playing] [Cohen doesn't quite have Tortelier's ability to make every movement tell a story but his playing had an honesty and directness that allowed the music to speak for itself] [Cohen's reading hit home in the mini cadenza and endless self communing codas of the slow movement and in the retrospective glances that preceded the concluding peroration in the finale] [Likewise, the Wagner influenced magic of Dvorak's writing for horns and woodwind was gently conjured by the RPO under the guidance of that most attentive of conductor accompanists Norman Del Mar] [of this much under-rated conductor's high grade musicianship of Brahms and Sibelius] [Sibelius' Fifth Symphony was right in every dimension – a towering performance in which every dynamic nuance was observed, tiny colouristic details (like the ricochet bowings of the double basses, punctuating the horns' motif in the finale) were highlighted and the grandeur of its individual conception unfolded inexorably]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	N/a

12. Strength in Depth. Bach at St John's, Smith Square. Anthony Payne
The Independent, 26/3/1991, p14

Technical and musicological terminology	[contrapuntal] [chorus] [counterpoint] [choruses] [solo singing] [treble] [soprano] [intonation] [contralto] [tone] [tenor] [under-projection]
Background information	[For many years the overwhelming power of the <i>St Matthew Passion</i> , rightly seen as one of the pinnacles of western art let alone Bach's sacred music, resulted in an underestimation of the shorter and more dramatically concise <i>St John Passion</i>] [Even now after it has been totally rehabilitated, commentators can make unfavourable comparisons] [At least one, for instance has found Bach's contrapuntal working in the central crowd chorus of the <i>St John</i> a little stiff]
Music referencing	a) [[Bach] [<i>St John Passion</i>] [the London Oriana Choir] [Leon Lovett's] [English Baroque Orchestra] [Ruth Holton] [Evangelist] Rogers Covey-Crump] [Christine Botes] [Christus] [Richard Halton] [Peter Harvey] [Lynton Atkinson] b) [<i>St Matthew Passion</i>]
Reference to the audience	[and the forthright interjections of the chorales drew the audience into a shared act with sure effect]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[This is to miss the point of the composers profound use of counterpoint, however, for the variety of his psychological insights here is astonishing] [Bach makes unsurpassed dramatic use of traditional contrapuntal means at key points, and the effects in performance can be powerful and unnerving] [Certainly the London Oriana Choir made the most of the theatrical opportunities in Leon Lovett's tightly structured performance] [The mob bayed for Christ's blood and the lawful uttered their views with hypocritical pomposity] [In fact the choral contribution was one of the most satisfying aspects of the occasion] [The great opening and closing choruses were delivered with a weight and seriousness that were movingly sustained, for instance] [With the English Baroque Orchestra producing a pointed although non-authentic accompanying texture, Leon Lovett's reading could be said to have belonged in the traditional category while remaining aware of modern performance practice] [The solo singing changed that perspective, however, and not entirely to the interpretation's benefit] [Years of respecting authenticity – in both its good and bad aspects – have left their mark on more than one of the soloists, and in restricting her sound to something like that of a boy treble the soprano Ruth Holton found herself unable to bring life to the passionate feeling of Bach's vision or cope with the wide emotional range required] [She also suffered intermittently from uncertain intonation – it seems that expecting women to make a boyish sound only encourages expressive affectation] [Authentically slanted, too, was the accomplished if somewhat restrained Evangelist of Rogers Covey-Crump, while the contralto Christine Botes and Christus Richard Halton took a more traditional view of their tasks] [Peter Harvey found himself somewhere between these opposed viewpoints, but sang with real commitment and warmth of tone; and the tenor Lynton Atkinson remained an odd individualist, truly moving at the close yet elsewhere alternating between phrases of distinction and under-projection]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	N/a
Other content	N/a

13. Plea for the planet. Paul Driver
The Sunday Times, 3/3/1991, p5.5

Technical and musicological terminology	[oratorio] [orchestra] [brass] [choruses] [chorus] [vocal soloists] [conductors] [choral-orchestral] [drums] [dissonance] [soloists] [tutti] [harmonic] [polyphonic] [plectrum] [antiphonally subdivided orchestral parts] [part-writing] [ensemble]
Background information	[The German composer Wolfgang Rihm and the British composer Simon Bainbridge were both born in 1952, and each had a premiere in London last week] [which calls for vast performing forces (large orchestra, offstage brass, multiple adult choruses, children's chorus, four vocal soloists, two speakers and two extra conductors) in its attempt to say a requiem for the earth] [the title refers to the Dies Irae section of the Requiem Mass; or rather, as the composer explains, to the two words that follow those two in the familiar text which has here "been allowed to erode – it has become worn down by weather. It is no longer Dies Irae, the Wrath of God, but Dies Illa, that day, the day when man stands alone in his guilt and becomes his own accuser"] [Completed in 1984, Dies reflects the growing influence of the ecological movement, nowhere stronger than in Germany] [Into the framework provided by the weathered words of the Dies Irae and doomy extracts from the Lamentations of Jeremiah and the Revelation of St John, Rihm slips in forebodings (sung in Italian) from Leonardo da Vinci's De Metallis, a vision of the earth as angered by man's extraction of its precious metals and affording aptly green remarks such as: "By this shall the great forests/be stripped of their vegetation"]
Music referencing	a) [Wolfgang Rihm] [Simon Bainbridge] [Cantus Contra Cantum] [the Symphony Orchestra of the Royal College of Music] [the Royal Festival Hall] [the BBC Symphony's] [Dies] [Dies Irae] [Dies Illa] [Lothar Zagrosek's] [the London Sinfonietta Voices] [Mahler's Song of the Earth] b) [Requiem Mass] [Krzysztof Penderecki] [the fantasia for Double Orchestra]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[...of Bainbridge's Cantus Contra Cantum, given under his own direction by the Symphony Orchestra of the Royal College of Music in the college's big white concert hall] [Rihm expresses his outrage at such prospect by means of many a full choral-orchestral clamorous outpouring, which reminded me (especially when a speaking chorus was used) of the oratorio style of Krzysztof Penderecki; but it was a subtle and touching gesture to have the words "Dies illa" first intoned by the soft voices of children] [Stylistically the work is, at one extreme, impressively hard-hitting (lots of drums and dissonance), and affectingly quiet and plangent at the other (the unaccompanied choral writing at the start), with nothing perhaps of solid memorability in between] [Rihm marshals his forces with notable power into a compact structure (only half an hour long) which is a sort of secular epiphany] [If doubt lingers that the use of such large forces is not entirely justified by the work's imaginative substance, Lothar Zagrosek's account of Dies, with soloists from the London Sinfonietta Voices, came over on the air waves with a definite grandeur and éclat] [the well chosen other item on his programme was Mahler's song of the Earth] [Simon Bainbridge's new work, Cantus Contra Cantum, bore little stylistic resemblance to that of his contemporary] [Even the penchant of both pieces for a massive tutti texture was not a point of similarity, being in Rihm's case a rhetorical manoeuvre familiar from much 20 th -century music, and in Bainbridge's a highly personal medium for the exploration (here, as in other works, such as the Fantasia for Double Orchestra of 1984) of new harmonic and polyphonic possibilities] [Cantus Contra Cantum, moreover, makes lively use of the one resource excluded from Dies, that is electronic sounds; these, with a predominantly twangy, plectrum-like flavour, blended with a wealth of polyphonic detail in the antiphonally subdivided orchestral parts to produce a fascinating, slowly self-adjusting musical continuum] [I didn't quite gain a sense of those "electronically created harmonic complexes engulfing all four corners of the auditorium", as the composer's programme note put it] [But the young RCM

	orchestra coped bravely and spiritedly with the demands of Bainbridge's novel part-writing and concept of ensemble, and certainly brought out something of the rich strangeness of his sound world]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[London Underground made it possible for me to miss the first few minutes] [while British Rail encouraged me to give up my plan to reach the Royal Festival Hall on Wednesday for the BBC Symphony's performance of Rihm's oratorio Dies, and return home in time for the live relay on Radio 3] [I am thus unable to report on the visual or acoustic impact of this piece]
Other content	N/a

14. Juggled memories of knights past. *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*. The Place. Michael John White.
The Independent on Sunday, 24/3/1991, p22

Technical and musicological terminology	[symphonic form] [classical repertory] [chamber group] [instrumental colouring] [sextet] [score] [conductor]
Background information	[During the past ten years Sir Peter Maxwell Davies has so effectively slipped out of one life into another – from the author of outrageous melodramas to the master of symphonic form, conductor of classical repertory and, not least, Knight of the Realm] [It comes late (1978) in the succession of Davies's music theatre scores] [setting the medieval legend of a simple monk with nothing to offer to the Virgin but his juggling skills – which, to everyone's amazement, she is pleased to accept] [(a more or less standard sextet, plus voice and mime)] [it follows his precedent of giving instruments dramatic roles (the Virgin plays the violin): and above all it draws on the standard Maxwell Davies imagery of kings and jesters, popes and antichrists who serve as metaphors for creativity]
Music referencing	[Sir Peter Maxwell Davies] [Knight of the Realm] [<i>Le Jongleur de Notre Dame</i>] [Lontano] [the Virgin] [Graham Titus] [the abbot] [Sean Gandini] [Odaline de la Martinez]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[<i>Le Jongleur De Notre Dame</i> , which played this week as part of a dance/drama double bill by the chamber group Lontano, is an excellent example – albeit rather a muted one] [and is of gentler character than most] [But it keeps faith with the instrumental colouring that haunts Davies's work of that period] [The artist as ruler, the artist as rebel] [In <i>Le Jongleur</i> , perhaps because its tone is more ingratiating, less strident than its predecessors, the message of rebellion is clearer – delivered with a potency of innocence (and a rather self-appreciating humour) nicely caught in this performance] [Graham Titus sang the abbot, Sean Gandini juggled with a degree of ingenuity] [and the Lontano players nurtured the virtuosity of the score with what I took to be affection although at a pace that could have done with more urgency from the conductor, Odaline de la Martinez]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[that when fragments of his past turn up in performance they feel like old movies: capsules of frozen style where the story and the hemlines are of almost equal interest] [which challenged my assumption that one ball in the air is much like any other]
Other content	N/a

15. The Grateful Dead. Rainbow. Richard Williams
The Times, 24/3/1981, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[concert] [songs] [country rock] [guitarists] [choruses] [keyboards] [blues] [Hammond organ] [collective improvisations] [a medium 7/4 tempo] [drummers] [pearly tone, stiff phrasing] [melodic] [chording] [repertoire] [drums] [gospel song] [rhythm] [tuning] [chords]
Background information	[The Grateful Dead are unusual not merely because they have been together for 15 years with only one significant change in personnel but because...they have chosen not to broaden their scope or change with the times. Their music is exactly as it was in the early summer of 1970, when they made their British debut] [by the group's newest member, Brent Mydland, who also played the keyboards] [two drummers, Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann]
Music referencing	a) [The Grateful Dead] [the guitarists Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir] [Brent Mydland] ["Sugaree"] ["El Paso"] [two drummers, Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann] ["If I Had My Way"] b) [unlike the even longer-lived Rolling Stones or The Who] ["If I Had My Way", the gospel song once popularised by Peter, Paul and Mary] [a slashing Bo Diddley rhythm]
Reference to the audience	[but evidently (to judge by the nature of last night's audience) still cherished in many hearts] [The audience's pronounced good nature was tested, however, by many lengthy silences]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[and they continue to reflect with scrupulous exactness the era of their prime, now long past] [with a selection of songs recalling the early days of country rock, sung with their customary amateurish charm] [given necessary support on the choruses] [Garcia's pretty "Sugaree" and Weir's surprising version of "El Paso" were the best of these, rivalled by a trenchant blues] [It was fully an hour before they ventured into the first of their famously discursive collective improvisations, this one in...] [capably anchored by their two drummers] [Here Garcia was unleashed, to display his renowned pearly tone, stiff phrasing and utter lack of melodic imagination, well prompted by Weir's thoughtful chording, as outstanding as it was 11 years ago] [In addition to several of the more venerable items from their repertoire, the second half included "If I Had My Way"] [(which showed off the relaxed, complimentary nature of the relationship between Hart and Kreutzmann) and an untypically flashy but highly effective ending] [during which the guitarists adjusted their tuning] [with the aid of stroboscopic devices]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Gently, at a marijuana smoker's pace, they eased into their four hour concert] [incorporating Mydland's screaming Hammond organ] [here given a slashing Bo Diddley rhythm with chattering drums] [Eventually this prompted the reflection that if God had meant rock musicians to stay in tune, he would have taught them more than three chords]
Other content	N/a

16. Original Mirrors. Lyceum. Robin Denselow
The Guardian, 10/3/81, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[bands] [keyboards] [disco rhythms] [set] [vocals] [ballads] [chiming guitar balladry] [futurist dance music] [ballads] [lyrics] [deadpan voice]
Background information	[Two good bands share the bill at the Lyceum. One is on the way up and seems destined for chart success in the next few weeks, while the other has done so badly - in purely commercial terms - that this is their last performance] [while their forthcoming single, Dancing with the Rebels] [The Only Ones failed because they were too original, providing doomy anguished ballads just as mass taste was moving in the opposite direction]
Music referencing	a) [the Lyceum] [Original Mirrors] [Dancing with the Rebels] [The Only Ones] [Peter Perret] [Another Girl Another Planet] [From Here to Eternity] [Flaming Torch] b) [At times they were like a heavy version of Ultravox with the chiming guitar balladry of U2 added in] [and a dash of Roxy] [was like a Slade football chant] [were like a new wave version of early Leonard Cohen]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Needless to say, the band which is being forced to retire is the more interesting] [They played an impressive enough set, with good vocals and a strong, swirling sound, but unfortunately their name backfired on them. They sounded very much like original mirrors, in that they reflected almost every original trend of the moment] [Then there was a dash of soul] [with futurist overtones] [Peter Perret's languid, painfully personal lyrics] [His deadpan voice certainly had its limitations but songs like Another Girl Another Planet, From Here to Eternity and Flaming Torch should remain as cult favourites for years to come]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Potential winners first, and two cheers for the Original Mirrors, a band whose intense use of keyboards and disco rhythms seems bound to lead to commercial rewards in these days of "futurist" dance music] [How can they fail?] [(and I don't mean that as an insult)]
Other content	N/a

17. Swinging it hot and blowing it cool. Derek Jewell
The Sunday Times, 15/3/81, p40

Technical and musicological terminology	[fusion music] [decibel-loaded] [rock guitarist] [jazz trumpet] [electric guitar] [rock virtuosi] [high guitar notes] [keyboards and bass] [drummer] [lyrical] [slow...theme] [dynamics] [volume] [ornamentation] [melody] [staccato] [slur] [echo] [bands] [saxist] [underplay] [tune] [bass] [muted trumpet] [choruses] [tone] [notes] [plucked sounds] [swing] [solos] [test-piece] [solos] [variations] [melody] [tenor] [musicianly]
Background information	[Despite the well-established vogue for fusion music, jazz and rock can often seem worlds apart in intention and effect] [Harry "Sweets" Edison, that most practiced veteran of jazz trumpet] [for at 37 he is an archetypal electric guitar hero, a word loosely applied to a select clutch of rock virtuosi] [at the Hammersmith Odeon during his first British tour in seven years] [Harry Edison is currently playing at Ronnie Scott's Club with another one-time corner stone of Count Basie's bands, the saxist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis] [Both men are over 60] [These two wise men from the swing era] [the Eddie Thompson Trio]
Music referencing	a) [Jeff Beck] [Harry "Sweets" Edison] [Hammersmith Odeon] [Simon Phillips] [Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis] ["Mean to Me"] [Len Skeat] [are wisely supported by the Eddie Thompson Trio] b) [a slow Jan Hammer theme] [Count Basie's bands] [rather as Paul Gonsalves did with Ellington]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[So it was refreshing last week to discover common ground between the decibel-loaded display of Jeff Beck, rock guitarist extraordinary, and the gentler art of Harry "Sweets" Edison, that most practiced veteran of jazz trumpet] [Beck's responsiveness was perhaps the more surprising] [Beck, however, largely resisted the urge to blow everyone else off stage] [His integration with keyboards and bass - each musician's inventions sparking off responses from the others - was impressive, and his rapport with drummer Simon Phillips, an outstanding example of rock understanding] [Reservations remain, nevertheless. Beck has so thrilling a lyrical gift, especially when he has a slow Jan Hammer theme to work on] [But as an expositor of the electric guitar's vocabulary... Beck remains unusually entertaining. Above all he still seems awash with ideas and enthusiasm] [and their partnership is totally felicitous, a venture by richly experienced players who have wit, fluency, and a wickedly acute sense of when to underplay] [Edison, for example, produced his show-stopper during the performance of that simple old tune, "Mean To Me." Suddenly there was only the bass of Len Skeat accompanying his muted trumpet] [Gradually, as the choruses unrolled, Edison's tone grew mistily softer, the notes skilfully complemented by the gently plucked sounds behind him] [The sense of swing and the compulsion never wavered until the hushed finale] [It was sheer magic, a test-piece by a master. Davis can lull you, and then shake you, just as effectively]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Superficially, of course, they are wildly dissimilar musicians. But they share one important trait: a willingness to listen to the other musicians on stage, and to respond accordingly] [And such stars, unleashing extravagantly long and flashy streams of high guitar notes, sometimes hear only themselves] [that I question his sense of dynamics. He should cut his volume more often for contrast] [At other times, he needs to reject machine-gun ornamentation in favour of simply letting the melody flow] [from soaring to staccato, from beguiling slur to wistful echo] [These days he slides into his solos, obliquely and softly. Then he'll harden his tone and crisply enunciate an assertive set of variations on whatever the given melody may be. Sweet-and-sour tenor it might be called] [Hear them all while such good-tempered and musicianly skills survive]
Other content	N/a

18. Past Masters. The Icicle Works. Town and Country. David Sinclair
The Times, 7/3/1987, p43

Technical and musicological terminology	[composition] [musicianship] [keyboard] [session player] [verses] [choruses] [plummy tones] [harmonies] [drumming] [beat] [band] [arrangements] [in front of the beat] [hooks] [flourishes]
Background information	[The Icicle Works, from Liverpool] [it has taken them seven years to achieve the status of sturdy second division professionals; a group whose records tend to reach the top three in the Independent charts, but stall just short of the national top 50] [the bassist, Chris Layhe] [their one hit, "Love is a Wonderful Colour" (from 1983)]
Music referencing	a) [The Icicle Works] [Dave Green] [Ian McNabb] [Chris Layhe] [Chris Sharrock] ["Rapids"] ["Horses"] ["Love is a Wonderful Colour"] ["From a Whisper to a Scream"] ["Who Do You Love"] ["Magic Bus"] ["Hey Bo Diddley"] b) [of a latter-day Scott Walker] [redolent of Keith Moon's] [Van Halen's "Jump" and even the Buffalo Springfield antique "For What It's Worth"]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[demonstrate a standard of composition, musicianship and even inspiration that would have shamed many prominent bands of previous decades] [Even allowing for the backstage keyboard contribution from session player Dave Green, the trio produced a remarkably full, meshed sound that perfectly complimented the clipped verses and magnificent choruses of their tightly-scripted material] [Ian McNabb sang with the dulcet, plummy tones] [bolstered the choruses with harmonies that gelled to perfection] [Chris Sharrock, whose busy drumming was redolent of Keith Moon's in places, kept slightly in front of the beat] ["Rapids", "Seven Horses", and their one hit, "Love is a Wonderful Colour" (from 1983) were dispatched with casual excellence] [But the purposeful mood was dissipated at the end when a hectic version of "From a Whisper to a Scream" became transmuted into an extemporised nod at the past, incorporating snatches of "Who Do You Love?" "Magic Bus" and "Hey Bo Diddley"] [Before we knew it they were knocking out passable versions of Van Halen's "Jump" and even the Buffalo Springfield antique "For What it's Worth"] [Such excursions threw the preceding set into less flattering relief by illustrating how, for all their talent, the band, in common with many others, is hide-bound by...] [For all their bright intelligent hooks, and keen, dramatic flourishes, there is little more to be said - as far as this kind of mainstream rock is concerned]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[It is getting harder all the time to become a rock star, but still there is no shortage of applicants for the job] [and with many a grand melodramatic sweep in the arrangements] [the dead weight of a legacy that is fast becoming impossible to transcend]
Other content	N/a

19. Tom Verlaine. Town and Country. Mat Snow
The Guardian, 21/3/1987, p12

Technical and musicological terminology	[sound effects] [band] [punk] [electric guitars] [pop] [lyricism] [soundscapes] [melodies] [sub-poetry] [voice] [pitch] [guitar] [vocal] [note] [improvisation] [ensemble] [songs] [anthem]
Background information	[A luminary of New York's mid-70s punk scene] [the icily austere music of Tom Verlaine's group, Television, proved far less commercially successful but retains a powerful cult and was a considerable influence on any earnest rock group trying to do something ambitious with electric guitars] [Rare of his generation, Verlaine (nee Miller) is a musician's musician] [even though elsewhere the hippie era was dismissed as a Dark Ages for pop]
Music referencing	a) [Tom Verlaine] [Marquee Moon] b) [which also spawned Blondie, Talking Heads and the Ramones] [who would take account of such guitar virtuosi as the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia] [Garcia-influenced] [New Wave] [Psychotic Reaction by Count Five]
Reference to the audience	[it was the audience who staggered out in an electrified daze] [he attracts all eyes in reverent gaze]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[The sound effects fo* Arctic gales and a funeral bell which welcome Tom Verlaine and his band onstage] [Today his Garcia-influenced lyricism still shines forth as the tender side of an otherwise savagely terse style] [He sings mostly of fragmented personality, eavesdropped conversation and opaque sub-poetry] [While his guitar sings so eloquently in those bony hands, his vocal shortcomings matter not at all] [As gaunt as Verlaine, his band of New Wave veterans hit crisply and very, very hard. Even when yielding little else, the rigour of their music is emphatically declared with every note] [It is this edge that also makes Verlaine such an oddly commanding performer] [For one who monkishly distains showbiz frills] [As the show progresses so Verlaine starts to relax] [After a selection of his recent excellent songs he treats us to a rendition of Marquee Moon, the single most sophisticated piece of music to come out of punk, plus an exhilarating account of the mid-60s garage-band anthem, Psychotic Reaction by Count Five] [By the end he was smiling]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[suitably presage the studiously ascetic thinking man's rock to come] [Verlaine creates urban soundscapes where melodies soar with skyscraper elegance even as his harsh textures evoke plateglass and grinding gears] [in a whinnying reedy voice that bespeaks a constant pitch of eggheaded nervous tension] [Through the teething tangents and the dramatic layers of their playing looms the precipice of improvisation in progress, even though for the most part this ensemble is as drilled as Sandhurst cadets]
Other content	N/a

*Error appears in original article.

20. Soul without heart. Robert Sandall on white sound
The Sunday Times, 22/3/1987, p49

Technical and musicological terminology	[pop] [musicians] [guitarists] [blues] [reggae] [soul] [funk] [harmonising] [funkier] [seven-piece band] [backing singer] [bass] [drumming] [staccato flourishes] [trumpet] [vibrato] [tenor vocals] [solos] [voice]
Background information	[At any given period white pop musicians can usually be found hankering nostalgically after one black musical idiom or another] [Eric Clapton led a posse of British guitarists in the blues revival of the late Sixties. A decade later, Sting and others popularised white reggae. More recently soul and funk have become the ersatz favourites and, for the time being, Simply Red are our leading suppliers] [Their enormous popularity in this country is a lot less surprising than their chart topping exploits last year in the more competitive American market] [the soul ballad, Holding Back the Years. Their first album, Picture Book, is still in the top 10 here a full year after its release. Their second, Men and women, came out a fortnight ago and went straight into the chart at number two. As a result, Simply Red's current British tour, a sell-out at every venue until mid-April] [Mancunian singer Mick Hucknall]
Music referencing	a) [Simply Red] [Brighton Centre] [Love Fire] [Right Thing] [I Wont Feel Bad] [Tony Bowers] [Chris Joyce] [Tim Kellett] [Hucknall] [Picture Book] [Sad Old Red] b) [Eric Clapton] [the blues] [Sting] [white reggae] [soul and funk]
Reference to the audience	[Hucknall grinningly asked the clamouring fans] [the adoring and spruce white audience at Brighton was in no mood for quibbling. They simply loved it]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[carries about it something of the air of a victory parade] [at the vast Brighton Centre last Tuesday] [after a particularly deft piece of harmonising on Love Fire] [the answer was never really in doubt] [Simply Red have acquired a sublimely easy confidence and unchoreographed slickness which suit the funkier outings of their new album very well indeed] [The seven-piece band and one distractingly sexy black female backing singer had plenty of both] [Right Thing, and I Wont Feel Bad ticked along in a typically crunchy fashion bringing Tony Bowers's restless bass into close communication with Chris Joyce's economical drumming. Tim Kellett's staccato flourishes on the trumpet were also always in the right place at the right time] [But it was really Hucknall...who demonstrated the most impressive control] [Adroitly breaking up the quivering vibrato of his distinctive high tenor vocals with a variety of kittenish yelps and squeals, he confirmed what anyone who has ever seen Simply Red's album cover knows: this is pretty much Hucknall's show] [There were few solos and nobody strayed far from the well-oiled routines of tight dancefloor funk] [Hucknall's meticulous technique could not quite bring off a heart rending result on older, moodier material like Picture Book and Sad Old Red] [Perhaps the brittle quality in his voice contributes to a slight but perceptible lack of warmth. [But whatever the final verdict on Simply Red's precocious white soul turns out to be]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[his moon face regularly eclipsed by an avalanche of ginger curls] [Funk is all about precision and timing] [The more feelingful, expansive reach of soul does not however yield so readily to such a measured and mannered approach] [Perhaps also this is why he is now leading the band in a funkier direction]
Other content	["We really know our stuff don't we?"]

21. Whoopin' and hollerin'. Los Lobos at the Town and Country Club. John Peel
The Observer, 1/3/1987, p27

Technical and musicological terminology	[songs] [tempos] [LPs] [cassette] [set] [rock 'n' roll] [country-tinged rock] [gig] [band] [guitar] [accordion] [steel guitar] [country/ rhythm and blues] [records] [solos] [sax breaks]
Background information	[As the quintet, well-fed boys from Spanish East Los Angeles]
Music referencing	a) [Brendan Croker and the 5 o'Clock Shadows] [Town and Country] [Los Lobos] [David Hidalgo] [Cesar Rosas] [Steve Berlin] b) [Allman Brothers] [Diana Ross] [reminding me at times of the Cate Brothers, whose Steve Cropper-produced debut LP]
Reference to the audience	[The Town and Country audience - principally male and given to beards, advanced spectacles and modest corporations - practised its whoops and hollers, learned from live Allman Brothers LPs all those years ago] [the men behind me fell to discussing <i>Sun</i> readers] [Were these yuppies, I wondered? And do yuppies care for what is, in the case of Los Lobos, invariably described as bar-room rock 'n' roll?...the answer seemed to be yes. Whata-whoopin' and a-hollerin there was] [the whoops grew louder] [Across the sea of thinning hair] [Behind me a woman was whoopin' and hollerin' at the conclusion of these songs and talking all the way through them]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Above the stage as Brendan Croker and the 5 o'Clock Shadows played hung a banner reading, in part, 'Eral wild carnivo' and depicting a wolf couchant. Beneath the banner Croker's band play well, rendering familiar songs with unfamiliar tempos] [As the well-drilled 5 o'clock Shadows concluded a satisfying set] [strode on stage] [However, as Los Lobos got underway there came the first stirrings of unease] [They played highly-efficient, country-tinged rock] [It was only when the first slow song was played that David Hidalgo, the big man who, reason dictated, would be the one who 'done good' if this turned out to be a gig of two halves, showed a curious vulnerability as he sang] [This was not, after all, just a routine re-run of cliches] [The impression of internal force grew as the band played on] [When Hidalgo laid down his guitar and strapped on the accordion for a pair of Tex-Mex numbers - in Spanish - the whoops grew louder and the whole event seemed to slip up a gear or two] [The Tex-Mex numbers over - too soon, in my book - Hidalgo turned to the steel guitar] [Frustration increased when this vanished into the wings after only one tune and Los Lobos returned to their country/rhythm and blues mainstream] [Los Lobos romped on. The accordion reappeared, although not in a Tex-Mex context] [Cesar Rosas turned in, on a number the title of which evaded me, one of the most complete and violent guitar solos I have heard and Steve Berlin's sax breaks were always uplifting] [But the songs, conventional musings on life, love and the pursuit of happiness, started to blur together]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[for the bootleg Los Lobos cassette that will surely be on sale in Camden Market this weekend] [in a manner that awoke in me unexpected sympathies with the readers of that odd publication] [Los Lobos, one felt, were there too 'blow ass' - or whatever it is that American's do on these occasions] [In a week when I had been asked, in apparent seriousness, for Diana Ross's phone number and sent four promotional packs of condoms, I was ready for anything] [the sort of Californian noise that, sanitised and deodorised, slips with hateful regularity into our charts] [Real blood pumps through the lupine veins] [is one of the few records from 1975 I can still listen to without embarrassment] [Fifteen years ago I would have hailed Los Lobos as saviours, but too much has happened since] [Could you find it in your hearts to forgive me if I said they have plenty of bark but no bite?]
Other content	N/a

22. David Lee Roth. Wembley Arena. David Sinclair
The Times, 5/3/1991, p18

Technical and musicological terminology	[vocal range] [hard-rock] [heavy-metal] [five-piece backing band] [sing] [a tune] [backing musicians] [band] [Marshall speaker] [double bass-drum] [bluesy songs] [chord]
Background information	[An irrepressible showman, David Lee Roth has got where he is primarily by a dint of athletic energy, brass neck and sheer force of personality. His limited vocal range has long been obvious, the quality of his writing questionable, but while he was the frontman of Californian hard-rock headliners Van Halen] [Now, at 35]
Music referencing	a) [David Lee Roth] [Wembley] ["Yankee Rose"] ["Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love"] ["California Girls"] ["It's Showtime"] ["Hot for Teacher"] b) [Van Halen] [Gary Glitter] [(and the Beach Boys)]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[his talent to thrill and enthrall was properly earthed by the weight of musicianship around him] [he is showing signs of turning into a heavy-metal Gary Glitter] [The climax of his Wembley show was tacky beyond belief] [While his five-piece backing band hammered out "Yankee Rose", Roth sneaked out to a boxing ring set towards the back of the auditorium. After delivering "Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love", from the ropes, he mounted a huge inflatable "microphone". Carried by half a dozen roadies, this phallic vehicle wobbled back towards the stage where a pair of giant fishnet-stockinged legs were now spreadeagled to either side of the musicians. Out of breath, off-balance and waving to his fans] [Roth attempted to sing his...old hit, "California Girls"] [Throughout the performance Roth conducted affairs like a circus ringmaster, pausing between numbers to deliver feeble one-liners...and generally turning the makings of good rock 'n' roll into a sleazy burlesque] [The backing musicians all gave a good account of themselves. But they were a fairly anonymous bunch and no member of this new band has come forward to fill the sparring partner role which is so necessary to counterbalance Roth's entertaining bluster] [Overshadowed by a ludicrous five-high wall of Marshall speaker cabinets stretching the width of the stage, Roth and the band were at their most impressive when playing the hell-for-leather, double bass-drum boogies "It's Show-time" and "Hot for Teacher"] [The bluesy songs touched a soulful chord, but too often Roth's preening and posturing rang hollow]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[like the queen of some cut-price carnival] [a tune which, as he has often demonstrated, he could not carry in a suitcase]
Other content	["I gave up drinking, smoking and screwing around; it was the worst ten minutes of my life"]

Technical and musicological terminology	[quartet] [four-square] [sonic] [dynamics] [guitar and bass] [vocalist] [violin-string] [instrument] [space-metal] [rockabilly] [boogie]
Background information	[They're already hacking a broad swathe through the Americas]
Music referencing	a) [Jane's Addiction's] [The Marquee] [Dave Navarro] [Eric A] [Perry Farrell] [Chickasaw Mudd Puppies] b) [which is possibly even more awkward and uncomfortable than the one in Wardour Street] [Zeppelin or The Clash] [Guns 'n' Jovi] [Support was from the Chickasaw Mudd Puppies]
Reference to the audience	[Addiction fans are liable to namedrop such illustrious forebears as Zeppelin or The Clash when seeking to describe them] [at the suicidal moshers plunging off the edge of the stage] [but the crowd was spluttering with adrenalin]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[and Jane's Addiction's appearance for this "secret" show turned The Marquee into a vile, heaving sweat-box] [It was a major achieveto* find a new location for the club] [Cunningly, they walk the line between chaos and K-Mart, often threatening to topple into full-scale sonic overkill, but always reining back with deft command of dynamics] [The act is pretty slick too] [Dave Navarro and Eric A (managing the guitar and bass) are lean, mean and naked from the waist up] [in charge is vocalist Perry Farrell, a stocky, close-cropped runt of a man dressed tonight like a stevedor from New York's East River. A not-so-nice Jewish boy from the Bronx] [a quaint duo from the backwoods of Georgia] [They whacked out a string of rockabilly rompers and hillbilly boogie with much energy but no finesse. The material was pretty feeble too] [If anyone had ever heard of them, you could yell "hype!"]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Hence Warner Bros' conviction that they've signed a world-beater - a kind of Guns 'n' Jovi] [Certainly, the quartet can bang out four-square rockers with a force that flattens your nose against your face] [Farrell is so wound up he vibrates like a violin string as he fires razor-edged one-liners into the crowd, and leers] [After an hour of blunt-instrument rockers and roaring space-metal one began to wonder if a trip to the psychotherapist on the way home mightn't be a sound idea]
Other content	N/a

*Error appears in original article.

24. Rug and Roll. Freddie Jackson. Hammersmith Odeon. Lloyd Bradley
The Independent, 7/3/1991, p17

Technical and musicological terminology	[album] [voice] [octaves] [song] [band] [funk] [volume] [vocals] [flourishes] [notes]
Background information	[Freddie Jackson's first hit was the lush, pleading ballad "Rock Me Tonight (For Old Times Sake)" in 1986. That and its similarly-titled album, displayed a voice of several octaves and a superb handling of a honey-dripping love song. But that remains his biggest UK hit, with his relative lack of success ascribed to an emergence of a second wave of sex gods...at the same time] [
Music referencing	a) [Freddie Jackson's] ["Tasty Love", "Nice 'n' Slow, "You Are My Lady"] b) [spectacularly Alex O'Neal and Luther Vandross] [Barry White]
Reference to the audience	[Come the final number, Jackson invited half a dozen young ladies from the audience up on to the stage to dance. When it was over, he ushered them backstage with what must have been meant as a leer] [As one female fan admitted: "Nobody actually fancies Freddie Jackson, we just like his voice"]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[It may also be that while Jackson on vinyl promises passion unparalleled with songs such as "Tasty Love", "Nice 'n' Slow, "You Are My Lady" and a new album entitled <i>Do Me Again</i> , the same man, with the same material on stage fails to deliver] [His band (referred to strangely as his "organisation")] [Jackson's vocals easily rose above (or swooped below) it with classy flourishes and almost enreningly held notes, but his heart wasn't really in it] [Clad in a fascinating suit - white and sparkly with a curious plastic sheen - he seemed eager to please] [Not in the Barry White way, you understand, more a nervous wanting to be liked] [He giggled a great deal, which might be fine for many situations - indeed he let us know he was enjoying himself] [when he chose to abandon his goofy good-naturedness and get nasty (hand in trouser pocket extended in front of him, a good deal of thrusting, rotating his portly body and caressing it with both hands) the effect was mildly disconcerting]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[churned out a kind of mellow-funk-by-numbers, flattening out suddenly in a quest for volume] [but when creating a mood designed to lend itself to a, er, romp on a bearskin rug, it's not ideal] [You knew these girls mums had nothing to worry about; he was probably going to see them safely to the bus stop] [Hardly a glowing reference for a prospective lurve god]
Other content	N/a

25. An ageing audience with God. Pop. Patrick Stoddart
The Sunday Times, 10/3/1991, p5.9

Technical and musicological terminology	[concert] [orchestra] [string and brass] [proms] [theme]
Background information	N/a
Music referencing	a) [Eric Clapton] [Albert Hall] [Layla] [Edge of Darkness] [White Room] b) [Cream] [The Albert Hall]
Reference to the audience	[Last Tuesday half the audience, quite possibly those who filled the Albert Hall in 1971, seemed to arrive sitting in the back of something long and shiny] [Would they have let anyone wearing M&S cords into the Crawdaddy Club?] [When Clapton did Layla in 1971, did the fans form a queue and walk to the front?]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[On Tuesday night one of the string and brass nights in Clapton's current series of Albert Hall proms, it was a marriage of mixed blessings] [The string section that was almost lapped halfway through Layla added new drive to the Edge of Darkness theme] [and seemed to be what White Room had been waiting for for two decades] [With or without strings Clapton is as exciting a musician as ever]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Here are five things I would not have brought to an Eric Clapton concert 20 years ago. A raincoat. A briefcase. A tie. A poserphone. And pills. Well, if I had brought pills, they wouldn't have been for blood pressure] [And another thing. Twenty years ago, the only person to turn up for Cream's farewell concert in a chauffeur-driven Jaguar would have been Eric Clapton] [That included me, although my Jag was no more than a posh mini-cab. Twenty years ago it would have been a long walk from Knightsbridge tube] [Sitting at a Clapton concert sets off such musings among those of us who wish we were as young as Clapton still looks] [There are burning questions too] [And would you ever have found Clapton playing with an orchestra 20 years ago? Or found an orchestra that would play with him?] [and if he goes back to the Albert Hall in 2011, no doubt the same crowd will be there too, playing air guitar on their walking-frames]
Other content	N/a

Technical and musicological terminology	[singing] [tunefully] [choirboy] [falsetto] [octaves] [sotto] [melodies] [songs] [lyrics] [backing band] [guitar] [keyboards] [reggae bass-line] [arrangements] [electro-pop] [finale] [disco anthem]
Background information	[It is all too easy to forget that Jimmy Sommerville is a bona-fide pop star] [His persona has become so bound up in his brave and tireless campaigning for the rights of gay people and on Aids-related issues that the patina of pop-stardom has all but worn away]
Music referencing	a) [Jimmy Somerville] ["Dance and Desire" tour] [<i>It's In His Kiss</i>] [<i>Better The Devil You Know</i>] [<i>You Are My World</i>] [<i>There's More To Love Than Boy Meets Girl</i>] [<i>Smalltown Boy</i>] [<i>Mighty Real</i>] b) [such as the Sixties girl group landmark <i>It's In His Kiss</i> and Kylie Minogue's <i>Better The Devil You Know</i>] [Reprising Bronski Beat's passionate electro-pop debut]
Reference to the audience	[Not for his fans though, the vast majority of whom are female and not averse to singing along lustily and tunefully with every familiar number]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[There might I suppose be some irony in the stage backdrop for Mr Somerville's 'Dance and Desire' tour - a large face emerging from between two well-muscled, male half-torsos - but then again there might not] [Jimmy himself is no oil painting: short, with reddish, cropped hair and a squashed-up face, his garish red, white and blue tracksuit bottoms and black cap-sleeved T-shirt only accentuate a tendency to gawkiness. He is not the world's best dancer either, shifting slightly leaden-footed from side to side, he periodically launches himself across the stage doing his unique variation of the Roach] [When he drops his trademark falsetto a couple of octaves for a sotto number...the effect is truly startling] [A propensity for well-chosen (both in politico-sexual and crowd-pleasing terms) cover versions] [does not overshadow his considerable talent as a song-writer] [The soaring melodies of songs like <i>You Are My World</i> and <i>There's More To Love Than Boy Meets Girl</i> are well matched to lyrics of unabashed romanticism equalled by few contemporaries] [Jimmy's more than competent seven-piece backing band manages to keep a firm grip on a tricky mix of musical ingredients] [<i>Starsky and Hutch</i> guitar sound, high-energy keyboards, the old reggae bass-line, and arrangements which might have turned out soggy, sound impressively crisp] [Surprisingly, only the man himself seems less than totally committed to the proceedings, as if slightly bewildered by the number of hits he's had] [Any fears he might be harbouring about impending respectability are ritually exorcised with a thunderous finale of the gay disco anthem <i>Mighty Real</i>]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[What he has got is a voice, half choirboy, half dentist's drill, which is utterly distinctive]
Other content	"To show my American record company that I haven't got an elastic band tied round my goolies" [Jimmy remarks that, no longer anybody's spring chicken, he feels a bit of a fraud]

27. Buddy Rich. Ronnie Scott's. Richard Williams
The Times, 26/3/1981, p11

Technical and musicological terminology	[big band jazz] [orchestra] [jazz] [first set] [drummers] [fills] [solos] [cross-sticking] [tom-tom rudiments] [eight bars] [tenor saxophonist] [alto saxophonist] [tone] [intonation] [ensemble] [arrangement] [band] [bass trombonist] [baritone saxophonist]
Background information	[At its most confined and stylized, big band jazz seems to answer a particular atavistic craving among its audience for order and system] [In the music of Buddy Rich and his 15-piece orchestra, for example, there is no room whatsoever for the spontaneous gesture or the happy accident] [(whose 46 th and 8 th was one of last year's most distinguished mainstream jazz albums)]
Music referencing	a) [Buddy Rich and his 15-piece orchestra] [Waymon Reed] [46 th and 8 th] [Steve Marcus] [Andy Fusco] [Zee] ["What a Fool Believes"] ["Got to Get You into My Life"] b) [Count Basie] [Lester Young] [Jackie McLean] [the Doobie Brothers'] [Paul McCartney's] [Earth, Wind and Fire]
Reference to the audience	["Leave them alone", shouted a compassionate ringsider]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[the main attraction seems to be the sound and vision of the leader, a small but ferocious figure] [It might be argued that such exercises have more to do with the parade ground than with jazz] [During Tuesday night's first set, Rich paid honest tribute to Count Basie and, by implication, Lester Young in an account of "One O'Clock Jump"; what place however could be found in Rich's ensemble for a wayward genius of Young's dimension?] [Technically speaking, rich is certainly one of the world's greatest drummers] [His fills are elaborate but logical, his punctuations brook no argument, and his solos contain stunning examples of the art of cross-sticking] [What he lacks is any degree of emotional warmth, and although this seems to impress his fans, it scarcely works to the benefit of his soloists] [The best of them, the fine trumpeter, Waymon Reed] [when Rich began his tom-tom rudiments about eight bars from home; others like Steve Marcus, the dependable tenor saxophonist, and Andy Fusco, an alto saxophonist whose small tone and sour intonation suggested that he was raised on a diet of early Jackie McLean records, were hardly given time to clear their throats before being engulfed by the ensemble] [Instead, Rich presented Zee, a group of three young women including his daughter, who sang adequate supper-club versions of the Doobie Brothers' "What a Fool Believes" and Paul McCartney's "Got to Get You into My Life", the latter in the brittle arrangement devised by Earth, Wind and Fire] [are more spontaneous than his music] [while introducing the band he berated the bass trombonist and the baritone saxophonist, who had jointly failed to arrive on the bandstand until the third number] ["Sure, I'll leave 'em alone", Rich spat. "In a cell"] [On second thoughts, perhaps that one was not a joke at all]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[almost literally whipping his cowed musicians through a series of exhausting calisthenics] [found himself positively trampled towards the end of one solo] [It could be said that Rich's jokes, liberally sprinkled between the tunes]
Other content	N/a

28. Davis/ Edison. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham
The Guardian, 17/3/1981, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[jazz] [swing bands] [trumpet] [tenor] [band] [piano] [bass] [drums] [mute] [volume] [soloing] [melody] [slurred phrasing] [chorus] [runs]
Background information	[played by the dwindling veterans of the swing bands of the Forties]
Music referencing	a) [Ronnie Scott's] [Harry "Sweets" Edison's] [Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis's] [Eddie Thompson] [Len Skeat] [Jim Hall] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	[- a manoeuvre that reduced the punters to complete and unaccustomed silence]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[is getting the full breezy treatment at Ronnie Scott's in the form of Harry "Sweets" Edison's trumpet and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis's tenor] [go about their business with an affectionate relish, and the enterprise is being suitably hustled along by an excellent local band featuring Eddie Thompson on piano, Len Skeat on bass and Jim Hall on drums] [The repertoire inevitably consists of the evergreens] [Edison plays mean to me with the mute on, gradually dropping the volume until he's soloing over the bass alone] [Davis was more subdued, but the attractively slurred phrasing, thumping chorus playing and skidding runs that are his trade mark still jostled through the proceedings] [The composition of this band is perfectly suited to making this kind of music buzz and hop]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[That winking, chuckling, corner-of-the-mouth jazz] [Both men who wear cavernous grey suits and make barn doors look like letter-boxes] [Hall in particular turned out to be a brisk performer who lifted, soothed and shepherded the front men as if he had been working with them for years] [letting the melody disappear into puffs of air] [The chorus of Bye Bye Blackbird sounded for all the world as if it were being played by a line-up of car horns]
Other content	N/a

29. The return of a star from West Side Story. Derek Jewell
The Sunday Times, 22/3/1981, p39

Technical and musicological terminology	[ballads] [plucked bass] [muted trumpet]
Background information	[who won an Oscar for her ebullient Anita in the "West Side Story" movie]
Music referencing	a) [Rita Moreno] [the Talk of the Town] ["Sunny Side of the Street"] b) ["West Side Story."] ["America"]
Reference to the audience	[when the audience longed for her to sing and dance]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Any cabaret singer who dives from stage into the thick of her audience in mid-song risks drowning in the thin waters of taste and timing] [That Rita Moreno survived the plunge at the Talk of the Town last week was a victory of talent over misguided zeal] [Nor was this the only chance taken by the entertainer] [She talked and talked in that squelchy confessional style of American chat-shows] [The heart of her show is a 10 minute recreation, with two dancers, of the superb "America" sequence from "West Side Story."] [It's dazzling marriage of words, music and dance is as breath-taking as when the full version hit the stage 24 years ago] [Her voice was a revelation: not at all ice-sharp, but softly controlled in ballads and flexible enough for an unexpectedly jazzy reading of "Sunny Side of the Street"] [The artful accompaniment of plucked bass and muted trumpet was a touch of sheer class, and typical of all Miss Moreno's excellent arrangements] [If only she'd let the music speak more expansively for her]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[British cabaret has no equivalent of this exhilarating explosion of Broadway expertise]
Other content	N/a

30. Elvin Jones. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham
The Guardian, 25/3/1987, p26

Technical and musicological terminology	[drummers] [repertoires] [late-bop] [polyrhythmics] [percussion] [tenor] [bass] [piano] [tone] [harmonics] [warbles] [explosive runs] [set] [pianist] [fortissimo] [tempos] [overblown] [keyboard] [chordal accents] [cymbal beats]
Background information	[Since Elvin Jones departed from the legendary John Coltrane band in the 1960s, the drummer's music has veered between tuneful and highly accessible repertoires that resemble late-bop outfits galvanised by time-warping polyrhythmics, and intense and clamorous versions of Coltrane's own mature style] [What comes out on top tends to depend on Jones's personnel] [As modest and self-effacing a man as ever was a percussion genius, Jones's own music is an open house for the initiatives of his sidemen] [He nevertheless keeps a hand on the reins through some astute hirings] [The current band works in the incantatory Coltrane mould]
Music referencing	a) [Elvin Jones] [Ken Hitchcock (tenor) Andy McKee (bass) and Fumio Itabashi (piano)] b) [John Coltrane band] [McCoy Tyner]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[Fortune and Hitchcock are good foils for each other, though the latter tended on Monday night to restrict himself to rather static versions of Coltraneish sound effects (yearning, splintered tone, high harmonics)] [Early on in the set, the injection of energy provided by the band's pianist was unmistakable] [Itabashi works in the McCoy Tyner mould, but demonstrates with awesome clarity a fact that it's easy to forget when listening to the lesser Tyner disciples and sometimes to the guru himself, that the styte*, being a constant fortissimo, requires massive enthusiasm, commitment from the player and the difficult art of split-second discrimination at extreme tempos if it isn't to sound simply overblown] [produced the reverberating chordal accents characteristic of the style fused indissolubly to Jones's cymbal beats, but would also realise dazzlingly* inventive runs out of the still asending* sparks]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[and let Fortune punch a piledriver of steely warbles and explosive runs through the general furious melee] [Itabashi, swaying and writhing at the keyboard like a marionette]
Other content	N/a

*Spelling as per original article.

31. Ellington over Tracey. Dave Gelly
The Observer, 8/3/1987, p22

Technical and musicological terminology	[jazz] [compositions] [orchestra] [brass, saxes, rhythm] [piano] [soloist] [band] [ensemble] [five-piece saxophone section] [close-harmony riffs] [drummer] [four-in-a-bar with brushes] [clarinet]
Background information	[This points to the fact that the standard jazz orchestra – brass, saxes, rhythm] [It's no secret that Stan Tracey is a musician of the school of Ellington] [His orchestra contains the same instruments as Ellington's]
Music referencing	a) [Stan Tracey's 15-piece band] [Ronnie Scott's] ['Genesis'] [Tony Coe, Guy Barker and Jamie Talbot] b) [school of Ellington]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[They were performing his new suite, 'Genesis', and making such an unforced and thoroughly enjoyable job of it] [They had been accomplished and interesting] [– works best in its original habitat] [The enclosed space and low ceiling concentrate the sound wonderfully] [his own piano style is similarly sparse and quirky, and he has a comparable sense of when to leave a soloist alone and when to unleash the band] [When the ensemble comes in it's full of venerable echoes, textures that few seem able to handle nowadays with quite such simple grace] [Unfortunately, Tracey does not have these superb players at his permanent disposal] [the band at Scott's last week was packed with musicians such as Tony Coe, Guy Barker and Jamie Talbot, all people with careers of their own to pursue]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Why does jazz sound so much better in a club than anywhere else? The question occurred to me, not for the first time, as I was listening to Stan Tracey's 15-piece band at Ronnie Scott's last week] [that I couldn't help reflecting on certain earlier compositions of his, unveiled at open air festivals and large concert halls] [but this was the sort of thing to make you chuckle, stamp your feet and make you yell encouragement at moments of inspiration] [It can be deafeningly loud or pin-drop quiet, but it's <i>real</i> , not mangled and blown up by amplification] [When for example did we last hear a five-piece saxophone section playing close-harmony riffs?] [When did a modern jazz composer last call upon a drummer to play four-in-a-bar with brushes?] [And when did you last hear the limpid tones of the clarinet in any contemporary jazz context at all?] [Stan Tracey's music is by no means pastiche, but the Ellingtonian spirit hovers over it nevertheless] [The days when band leaders could, like Ellington, engage great musicians as full-time employees are gone]
Other content	N/a

32. Ken Peplowski. Pizza Express. Clive Davis
The Times, 4/3/1991, p16

Technical and musicological terminology	[jazz] [musicians] [notes] [soloists] [saxophonist] [guitarist] [reeds player] [swing orchestras] [bop player] [troubadour] [rhythm sections] [band] [album] [ballads] [tenor] [tone] [clarinet] [saxophone] [phrases] [upper register]
Background information	[Along with the saxophonist Scott Hamilton and guitarist Howard Alden, the Ohio-born reeds player Ken Peplowski is a key member of this generation] [Open to all sorts of influences, he has worked with swing orchestras, bop player Sonny Stitt and even the troubadour Leon Redbone] [His last Concord album, <i>Mr Gentle and Mr Cool</i> , was an invigorating cocktail, the ingredients including neatly arranged Tin Pan Alley songs, and even one of John Coltrane's more playful tunes, "Syeeda's Flute Song"] [Peplowski is now in the middle of a tour which has taken him to some far-flung venues]
Music referencing	a) [Ken Peplowski] [Dean Street Pizza Express] [Colin Purbrook Trio] ["Syeeda's Flute Song"] ["Careless Love"] b) [Scott Hamilton] [Howard Alden] [Sonny Stitt] [Leon Redbone] [<i>Mr Gentle and Mr Cool</i>] [Tin Pan Alley Songs] [John Coltrane's] [Ike Quebec] [Coleman Hawkins] [Ben Webster]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[His jokes between numbers at the Dean Street Pizza Express suggested that he has become acquainted with the varying skills of British rhythm sections] [Though he ideally needs to be seen with the kind of red-blooded American band featured on the Concord album, he was certainly in capable hands with the Colin Purbrook Trio] [After clearing his lungs with a flurry of up-tempo Ike Quebec, he allowed the pace to drop on "Careless Love" before embarking on the first of his ballads] [His tenor playing is tailor made for the romantics] [Alternately lush and feathery, the tone is impeccable] [Listeners raised on Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster will probably find it too urbane] [But there can be few complaints about his clarinet skills] [The instrument is normally considered bland in comparison to the saxophone] [Peplowski turns conventions upside-down, performing with grit and verve] [When the mood takes him, he can be as mellifluous as the next man, but it is the jagged snorting phrases, the sudden dashes towards the upper register, that are most impressive of all]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Though the publicists would have us believe otherwise, jazz is running short of genuinely towering musicians, the kind of charismatic artists who can be identified in just a handful of notes] [Too many great players have died, not enough new ones have come along to take their place] [One bright sign is the influx of soloists who are committed to reinterpreting the heritage of the Thirties and Forties] [They may not be taking giant strides into the future, their dress sense may not raise temperatures among readers of <i>GQ</i> or <i>The Face</i> , but they are making exceptionally graceful and accessible music]
Other content	N/a

33. Freddie Hubbard. Jazz Café. Ronald Atkins
The Guardian, 9/3/1991, p21

Technical and musicological terminology	[post-bebop trumpeters] [fusion albums] [set] [trumpet] [semi-quavers] [drummer] [high note flourishes] [flugelhorn] [chorus] [rhythm section] [swing] [tenor saxophone] [solo] [bend phrases and invert them] [riffs] [blues] [tone] [notes] [all registers]
Background information	[The death of Woody Shaw has made Freddie Hubbard stand out even more among the surviving post-bebop trumpeters from the sixties] [Since his time with art Blakey, there has been a mix of fusion albums and all-star gatherings, even one where Hubbard played The Saints as part of a tribute to Louis Armstrong] [It's a career that has lacked direction compared to those of contemporaries like Wayne Shorter or Herbie Hancock]
Music referencing	a) [Freddie Hubbard] [Jazz Café] [Just One of Those Things] [Louis Hayes] [God Bless The Child] [Off Minor] [Don Braden] [Thermo] b) [Woody Shaw] [Art Blakey] [The Saints] [Louis Armstrong] [Wayne Shorter or Herbie Hancock]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[His opening set at the Jazz Café provided a feast of trumpet virtuosity] [He began with Just One of Those things taken at a speed so fast that simply to keep semi-quavers flying along with the beat represented a triumph] [When he came to swap ideas with drummer Louis Hayes, the high note flourishes were majestic] [He then switched to flugelhorn and, for a change, interpreted God Bless The Child at a pace so funereal each chorus each chorus took more than three minutes to complete] [Even with the rhythm section doubling behind him it proved hard to swing and the shimmering, attractively plummy sound Hubbard gets from the flugelhorn made more of an impact on the following Off Minor] [This number gave Don Braden on tenor saxophone his first real chance of the night] [He seemed at odds with the relentless attack of Hayes, but a later solo of an old Hubbard tune called Thermo found him sufficiently relaxed to bend phrases and invert them at will] [Hubbard also shone particularly on the final pieces] [he enlivened Thermo by blasting the air with background riffs and then brought all his skills to bear on the closing blues] [The incandescent tone and the easy flurry of notes in all registers made the point that Hubbard in the right setting remains at the top of his class]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[When he gets the chance to put a group together, though, the flair and fire of his youth come across as potently as ever]
Other content	N/a

34. Moonstruck by a quiet original. Jimmy Giuffre. Jazz Café. Richard Williams
The Independent on Sunday, 24/3/1991, p22

Technical and musicological terminology	[clarinettist] [jazz] [woodwind, guitar and bass] [folksy] [trio] [spontaneous improvisation] [pianist] [bassist] [blues] [tone] [clarinet] [soprano saxophone]
Background information	[Without too much strain, the Texan clarinettist Jimmy Giuffre could have been Dave Brubeck or Erroll Garner, a jazz musician with box-office appeal] [Instead he became one of those quiet originals who stud the history of American music, and who somehow evade lasting popular success] [Giuffre did have one hit, of course] ["The Train and the River", a short piece for woodwind, guitar and bass is the jazz equivalent of Pachelbel's Canon or Picasso's "Child With a Dove": for 35 years since it appeared on the soundtrack of <i>Jazz on a Summer's Day</i> , it's innocent perfection has been disarming cynics] [Then in the early Sixties, Giuffre threw away his chance to exploit its gentle, folksy sound, diving instead into the turbulence of the avant-garde with a new trio devoted to the rigours of spontaneous improvisation] [And that was the end of his as a potential Brubeck] [The second trio – the unpopular one – is now on a world tour, reuniting Giuffre with the pianist Paul Bley and the bassist Steve Swallow for the first time in almost 30 years] [In their maturity (Swallow is 50, Bley 58, Giuffre – astonishingly – 69)]
Music referencing	a) [Jimmy Giuffre] ["The Train and the River"] [Paul Bley] [Steve Swallow] ["All The Things You Are"] ["I Can't Get Started"] [Jazz Café's] b) [Dave Brubeck] [Errol Garner] [Pachelbel's Canon] [<i>Jazz on a Summer's Day</i>]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[In London last week, we saw the value of his courage] [they show how beautifully the spirit and techniques of the old avant-garde can be applied to earlier material] [They started with a blues which sounded like what it was, a conversation in which old friends picked up the threads of unfinished debates] [Warm and relaxed, but utterly free of cliché, it took its tone from the unique drifting-woodsmoke sound of the leader's clarinet] [Switching to soprano saxophone, Giuffre nudged his colleagues through something which eventually, through the most delicate of allusions, revealed itself to be the familiar "All The Things You Are"] [more straightforward was another ballad, "I Can't Get Started", so gorgeously moonstruck that even the hinge on the Jazz Café's kitchen door stopped its squeaking]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	Na
Other content	N/a

35. Crystal Gayle. Apollo Victoria. Richard Williams
The Times, 6/3/1981, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[rock] [country music] [rhythm and blues] [jazzy] [ballads] [blues] [band] [piano] [organ] [guitarist]
Background information	[It's major star now is Kenny Rogers, an affable singer of middling talent who has assiduously eradicated from his delivery all the more pungent traces of the country music tradition] [Crystal Gayle is probably his nearest female counterpart] [Although born into a Tennessee family, she was brought up further north, which has probably made it easier for her to broaden out into a style closer to Caesar's Palace than to the Grand Ol' Opry]
Music referencing	a) [Crystal Gayle] ["Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City"] ["Lover Man"] ["What a Little Moonlight Can Do"] ["When I Dream"] ["Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue"] [Chris Losinger] b) [Urban Cowboy] [Saturday Night Fever] [Kenny Rogers] [Caesar's Palace] [Grand Ol' Opry] [Bobby Bland's] [Percy Sledge]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[She can still produce the old glottal catch and the twanging accent to order, but last night's concert was really about her ability to manage rhythm and blues, in a surprising version of Bobby Bland's "Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City, jazzy standards ("Lover Man" and "What a Little Moonlight Can Do") and all-purpose ballads like "When I Dream" and "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue"] [Oddly enough the blues-slanted songs were the most convincing] [This probably had something to do with the proclivities of her excellent band, which made atmospheric use of a combination of piano and organ, and featured a discretely effective guitarist in Chris Losinger] [At times they sounded like the musicians on the old Percy Sledge records, which is praise enough]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Ever sensitive to shifting tastes, and spurred on by furious competition for the advertising dollar, American pop radio stations change their formats with disconcerting frequency] [One major chain which operates stations across the continent, recently explained its rejection of rock and conversion to country music in these startling terms "We believe that we all grew up to be cowboys"] [If <i>Urban Cowboy</i> now inspires dreams once moulded by <i>Saturday Night Fever</i> , Nashville has not been slow to adjust to its new status by making the necessary compromises]
Other content	N/a

36. Japanese Music. Roundhouse. Hugo Cole
The Guardian, 16/3/1991, p9

Technical and musicological terminology	[zither] [moveable bridges] [guitar] [scales] [Pentatonic scales] [western folk music] [timbres] [in-between tones] [lower notes] [vibrato] [percussionist] [gongs] [percussion instruments] [gongs] [rattle] [tinklers]
Background information	[Koto, Shamisen and Shakuhachi are the three traditional instruments of the Japanese Edo period: the first, a sort of zither with moveable bridges, the second belonging to the guitar family, the third a five-hole bamboo pipe of perfect simplicity] [The similarities are really misleading, as are parallels between Japanese scales and the Pentatonic scales of western folk music, for the techniques of the instruments give rise to music of inflexions and timbres unique to themselves]
Music referencing	a) [Katsuya Yokoyama] [Neil Sorrell's] [Sumire Yoshihara] [Maki Ishii] [Masaru Tanaka's Un-En for two kotos] [Joji Yuasa] b) [Ravel's Rapsodie Espagnole]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[The easiest music to latch on to was that of the Shakuhachi, Katsuya Yokoyama producing a marvellous range of in-between tones and timbre, with powerful lower notes like explosive sneezes], expressive vibrato produced by head-shaking] [The techniques were fascinating] [The contemporary works, however, were surprisingly easy to follow and enjoy] [The percussionist, Sumire Yoshihara crouched among her gongs or raced round a circle of assorted percussion instruments in a lively and picturesque work by Maki Ishii with discrete tape backing: good music theatre and not at all too long for its content, while a theme reminiscent of the main theme of Ravel's Rapsodie Espagnole provided reassuring landmarks] [Masaru Tanaka's Un-En for two kotos – Japanese sounds but western style rhetoric – brought us closer to the instrument's varied and quite amply expressive characters than the traditional works] [An extract from a one hour work by Joji Yuasa for Shakuhachi and percussion, with Sumire Yoshihara caged by gongs, rattle and tinklers also exploited the instruments skilfully and explained itself very clearly in a passionate and rhapsodic way] [The musical content of these works in a western intellectual sense may have been unremarkable, but such precisely planned music, so full of interesting new sounds and played with so much virtuosity made a delightful impression]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[but even after Neill Sorrell's interesting and informative pre-concert talk, I still felt like a day tripper in a very strange land]
Other content	N/a

Technical and musicological terminology	[soul] [set] [solo] [repertoire] [funky]
Background information	[when it was first released 26 years ago, the song never even dented the British Top Twenty] [Now it's topping the charts, just as Percy Sledge's soul classic from '66, When A Man Loves A Woman, is at No. 2] [Both songs have, of course, featured very heavily in recent advertising campaigns for jeans, but King has had an extra benefit: his song also provides the title and theme music for a new teen movie] [Well, he always was lucky] [Back in '59, his unsuccessful Harlem band, the Five Crowns, were invited to "become" The Drifters as the original Drifters had broken up] [The new group were given the production and writing team of Leiber and Stoller to help them, and the result was a string of hits like Save The Last Dance For Me] [(actually hits for the group after he had left to go solo)] [which he recorded just before Stand By Me] [He has struggled through his lean years]
Music referencing	a) [Ben E. King's] [the Palladium] [The cast included Ronnie Wood from the Stones, John Paul Jones from Led Zeppelin, Mick Jones from Foreigner, Madelleine Bell, and an exuberant Mick Hucknall from Simply Red] [Stand By Me] [On Broadway] [Up On The Roof] [Spanish Harlem] [Supernatural] [When A Man Loves A Woman] b) [Percy Sledge's] [When A Man Loves A Woman] [The Five Crowns] [The Drifters] [Leiber and Stoller] [Save The Last Dance For Me] [the Stones]
Reference to the audience	N/a
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[At the end of Ben E. King's triumphant show at the Palladium, the stage was literally littered with three generations of his stars, all revelling in his good fortune] [all joining the one-time lead singer for The Drifters in his current No. 1 hit, Stand By Me] [That classic was of course included in Ben E. King's Palladium set, along with On Broadway and Up On The Roof] [and his first big solo hit, Spanish Harlem] [With a repertoire like that King could guarantee an evening of non-stop nostalgia, but this was still an uneven set, for he included several of his lesser songs from the Seventies] [but his dignity and style showed that he has never wrecked that glorious voice by resorting the excesses of cabaret] [He may have a light, sweet, unraunchy style for a soul singer, but he showed he could still handle his funky hit from '75, Supernatural Thing, and he paid tribute to [It was a great celebration]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Some people are born lucky, and the only decent responses to their luck is to join in the celebrations]
Other content	N/a

Technical and musicological terminology	[griot] [praise songs] [opera] [blues] [ballads] [voice] [embellishment] [lute-like kora] [ngoni] [guitar] [bass lines] [rhythm patterns] [R 'n' B] [backing vocals] [drum]
Background information	[Ami Koita is a very modern reminder of a very ancient African tradition] [she's a griot, from a family of hereditary musicians, and her repertoire consists partly of praise songs about early heroes and warriors from her native Mali, the lives and famous ancestors of those who become her patrons] [but a successful griot has a more simple and satisfactory financial arrangement – presented with cash, cars and even houses by wealthy admirers of their music] [Ami Koita is a major star among Malian praise singers and she looks the part, expensively dressed in gold jewellery and matching red and green headscarf and gown, with sleeves and blouse]
Music referencing	a) [Ami Koita] [Ronnie Scott's] b) N/a
Reference to the audience	[wide enough to hold the wedge of £10 notes that (mostly) African members of the audience presented to her during the show] [[and Koita didn't seem to object when the stage was invaded by an unnecessary talking drum player] [that had a packed-out Ronnie Scott's applauding even in the middle of songs]
Critic's view – objective observations, judgements or simple subjective descriptions	[She came on with the dignity and self-assurance of a great opera star, but proceeded to sing with the emotion of a great blues artist] [Many of the songs were ballads, performed with an almost conversational ease and a stately, slightly harsh voice that was capable of sudden bursts of embellishment and unexpected power and passion] [she was backed by two traditional stringed instruments, the tinkling, lute-like kora and the ngoni, which looks like a miniature home-made guitar but clonked out bass lines and rhythm patterns] [Her 20-year old daughter, who provided the even harsher-edged backing vocals, is another griot in the making, but looked as if she could have stepped out of any fashionable Western club, at least until she demonstrated some wild African dancing] [In Mali, it seems, serious music is never too solemn a business] [or when one of her aides jumped up halfway through a song to complain in French that the kora couldn't be heard] [She had a majesty that could ignore such minor interruptions]
Critic's view – subjective comments or embellished, author-led commentary	[Pop starts in the West may have to battle with record companies and managers for their money] [A woman like this has status beyond that of a mere pop singer, and knows it] [that showed how similar Malian styles are to R 'n' B and are therefore so accessible to Western ears]
Other content	N/a

**Original Newspaper Articles Included for Qualitative
Analysis with Index**

(Note, the indexed article numbers shown below correspond with the associated analysis table numbers listed in the index to Appendix U, so for example analysis table No. 1 at Appendix U corresponds with article No. 1 at Appendix V, and so on.)

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Classical, Early, Contemporary and Contemporary Classical		
1.	RPO/ Weller. Festival Hall. Paul Griffiths. <i>The Times</i> , 16/3/1981, p11	312
2.	Knussen/ Birtwistle. Round House/ Radio 3. Hugo Cole. <i>The Guardian</i> , 2/3/1981, p9	313
3.	A new British masterpiece. Felix Aprahamian. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 8/3/1981, p39	314
4.	Forging a link with Van Gogh. Stephen Walsh. <i>The Observer</i> , 8/3/1981, p36	315
5.	Dresden Staatskap/ Davis. Festival Hall. Richard Morrison. <i>The Times</i> , 14/3/1987, p43	316
6.	Willcocks/ Bach Choir. Festival Hall. Edward Greenfield. <i>The Guardian</i> , 4/3/1987, p26	317
7.	Mozart the classical. English Baroque Soloists/ St John's. Michael John White. <i>The Independent</i> , 26/3/1987, p14	318
8.	The liberating effect. Paul Driver on a week devoted to the work of Olivier Messiaen. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1987, p50	319
9.	Climbing to the summit of Mount Messiaen. Peter Heyworth. <i>The Observer</i> , 22/3/1987, p25	320
10.	ECO/ Pinnock. Barbican Hall/ Radio 3. Hilary Finch. <i>The Times</i> , 12/3/1991, p22	321
11.	RPO/ Del Mar. Festival Hall. Meirion Bowen. <i>The Guardian</i> , 9/3/1991, p21	322
12.	Strength in Depth. Bach at St John's, Smith Square. Anthony Payne. <i>The Independent</i> , 26/3/1991, p14	323
13.	Plea for the planet. Paul Driver. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 3/3/1991, p5.5	324
14.	Juggled memories of knights past. Le Jongleur de Notre Dame. The Place. Michael John White. <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	325
Rock and Pop		
15.	The Grateful Dead. Rainbow. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 24/3/1981, p9	326
16.	Original Mirrors. Lyceum. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 10/3/81, p9	327
17.	Swinging it hot and blowing it cool. Derek Jewell. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 15/3/81, p40	328

18.	Past Masters. The Icicle Works. Town and Country. David Sinclair. <i>The Times</i> , 7/3/1987, p43	329
19.	Tom Verlaine. Town and Country. Mat Snow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 21/3/1987, p12	330
20.	Soul without heart. Robert Sandall on white sound. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1987, p49	331
21.	Whoopin' and hollerin'. Los Lobos at the Town and Country Club. John Peel. <i>The Observer</i> , 1/3/1987, p27	332
22.	David Lee Roth. Wembley Arena. David Sinclair. <i>The Times</i> , 5/3/1991, p18	333
23.	Jane's Addiction. Marquee. Adam Sweeting. <i>The Guardian</i> , 6/3/1991, p36	334
24.	Rug and Roll. Freddie Jackson. Hammersmith Odeon. Lloyd Bradley. <i>The Independent</i> , 7/3/1991, p17	335
25.	An ageing audience with God. Pop. Patrick Stoddart. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 10/3/1991, p5.9	336
26.	Straight from the heart. Rock. Jimmy Sommerville. Hammersmith Odeon. Ben Thompson <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	337
Jazz		
27.	Buddy Rich. Ronnie Scott's. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 26/3/1981, p11	338
28.	Davis/ Edison. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. <i>The Guardian</i> , 17/3/1981, p9	339
29.	The return of a star from West Side Story. Derek Jewell. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , 22/3/1981, p39	340
30.	Elvin Jones. Ronnie Scott's. John Fordham. <i>The Guardian</i> , 25/3/1987, p26	341
31.	Ellington over Tracey. Dave Gelly. <i>The Observer</i> , 8/3/1987, p22	342
32.	Ken Peplowski. Pizza Express. Clive Davis. <i>The Times</i> , 4/3/1991, p16	343
33.	Freddie Hubbard. Jazz Café. Ronald Atkins. <i>The Guardian</i> , 9/3/1991, p21	344
34.	Moonstruck by a quiet original. Jimmy Giuffre. Jazz Café. Richard Williams. <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> , 24/3/1991, p22	345
Roots		
35.	Crystal Gayle. Apollo Victoria. Richard Williams. <i>The Times</i> , 6/3/1981, p9	346
36.	Japanese Music. Roundhouse. Hugo Cole. <i>The Guardian</i> , 16/3/1991, p9	347
37.	Ben E. King. Palladium. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 4/3/1987, p26	348
38.	Ami Koita. Ronnie Scott's. Robin Denselow. <i>The Guardian</i> , 12/3/1991, p36	349

Low Level, Non-Specialised Musical Terminology Occurring in Content Analysis of Articles across all Years, Genres and Publications

		Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary classical	Rock and Pop	Jazz	Roots
1961	<i>The Times</i>	[concert] [second piano concerto] [solo] [accompaniment] [passages] [oboe] [cello] [chamber musician] [piano] [keyboard] [march] [Finale] [virtuosity] [waltz] [the work] [symphony] [instrument] [orchestration] [woodwind] [keep exact time] [orchestra] [beat] [interpretation]	[concert] [songs] [country rock] [guitarists] [choruses] [keyboards] [blues] [collective improvisations] [drummers] [tone] [phrasing] [melodic] [repertoire] [drums] [gospel song] [rhythm] [tuning] [chords]	[big band jazz] [orchestra] [jazz] [first set] [drummers] [solos] [tone] [intonation] [arrangement] [band] [ensemble]	[rock] [country music] [rhythm and blues] [jazzy] [blues] [band] [piano] [organ] [guitarist]
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[conducted] [players] [ensemble] [the work] [unison] [repertory piece] [rhythmic] [rhythmic conflicts] [un-conducted] [bass line] [double bass] [solos] [operatic trio] [oboe, clarinet] [slow movement]	[bands] [keyboards] [disco rhythms] [set] [vocals] [ballads] [chiming guitar balladry] [futurist dance music] [ballads] [lyrics] [deadpan voice]	[jazz] [swing bands] [trumpet] [band] [piano] [bass] [drums] [volume] [soloing] [melody] [chorus] [runs]	[guitar] [scales] [western folk music] [percussionist] [gongs] [percussion instruments] [gongs] [rattle] [tinklers] [lower notes] [in-between tones]
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[conducted] [mixed chorus] [instruments] [wind writing] [concert repertoire] [prelude] [pulse] [instrumental] [players] [choral and orchestral groupings] [voices] [semi-chorus]	[distorted-loaded] [rock guitarist] [jazz trumpet] [electric guitar] [rock virtuoso] [high guitar notes] [keyboards and bass] [drummer] [lyrical] [slow...theme] [volume] [melody] [echo] [bands] [sadist] [tune] [bass] [choruses] [tone] [notes] [plucked sounds] [swing] [solos] [test-piece] [solos] [variations] [melody] [musicianly] [fusion music] [underplay]	[ballads] [plucked bass]	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	[works] [composer] [orchestral work] [concert] [themes] [wind and percussion band] [cello and bass tone]	n/a	n/a	n/a
1967	<i>The Times</i>	[conducted] [the finale] [orchestra] [movements] [strings] [choral] [soloists] [tuning] [pacing] [brass-section]	[composition] [musicianship] [keyboard] [session player] [verses] [choruses] [plummy tones] [harmonies] [drumming] [beat] [band] [arrangements] [flourishes] [in front of the beat] [hooks]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[choir] [tone] [sung] [soloists] [quartet] [voice] [singers] [tenth and last movement]	[sound effects] [band] [punk] [electric guitars] [pop] [lyricism] [soundscapes] [melodies] [voice] [guitar] [vocal] [note] [improvisation] [ensemble] [songs] [anthem]	[drummers] [percussion] [bass] [piano] [tone] [warbles] [set] [pianist] [tempo] [keyboard] [cymbal beats] [repertoires] [explosive runs]	[soul] [set] [solo] [repertoire] [funky]
	<i>The Independent</i>	[orchestral] [instrumental] [soloist] [notes] [slow movements] [authentic instrument performances] [decoration] [tone] [finale]	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[works] [orchestral] [chorus] [strings] [orchestration] [Indian rhythms]	[pop] [musicians] [guitarists] [blues] [reggae] [soul] [funk] [funkier] [seven-piece band] [backing singer] [bass] [drumming] [trumpet] [tenor vocals] [solos] [voice] [harmonising]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	[piano] [dynamics] [rhythms] [chant] [gongs] [cymbals] [operatic] [chords] [orchestral] [central section]	[songs] [tempo] [LPs] [cassette] [set] [rock 'n' roll] [country-tinged rock] [gig] [band] [guitar] [accordion] [steel guitar] [country/ rhythm and blues] [records] [solos]	[jazz] [compositions] [orchestra] [brass, saxes, rhythm] [piano] [soloist] [band] [drummer] [clarinet] [ensemble] [five-piece saxophone section]	n/a

1991	<i>The Times</i>	[violin] [wind] [song] [dynamic level] [Flute] [Harp] [melody] [viola] [oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn] [movement]	[vocal range] [hard-rock] [heavy-metal] [five-piece backing band] [sing] [a tune] [backing musicians] [band] [bluesy songs] [chord]	[jazz] [musicians] [notes] [soloists] [saxophonist] [guitarist] [swing orchestras] [band] [album] [ballads] [tenor] [tone] [clarinet] [saxophone] [phrases]	n/a
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[cellist's] [finale] [horns and woodwind] [dynamic] [movement] [conductor accompanists]	[quartet] [sonic] [dynamics] [guitar and bass] [vocalist] [violin-string] [instrument] [space-metal] [rockabilly] [boogie]	[set] [trumpet] [drummer] [chorus] [rhythm section] [swing] [solo] [blues] [tone] [fusion albums] [high note flourishes] [bend phrases and invert them] [notes]	[praise songs] [opera] [blues] [ballads] [voice] [guitar] [bass lines] [rhythm patterns] [R 'n' B] [backing vocals] [embellishment]
	<i>The Independent</i>	[chorus] [choruses] [solo singing] [tone] [under- projection]	[album] [voice] [song] [band] [funk] [volume] [vocals] [flourishes] [notes]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[orchestra] [brass] [choruses] [chorus] [vocal soloists] [conductors] [choral-orchestral] [drums] [soloists] [ensemble]	[concert] [orchestra] [string and brass] [proms] [theme]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	[instrumental colouring] [conductor]	[singing] [tunefully] [choirboy] [melodies] [songs] [lyrics] [backing band] [guitar] [keyboards] [reggae bass-line] [arrangements] [electro-pop] [finale] [disco anthem]	[clarinettist] [jazz] [woodwind, guitar and bass] [folksy] [trio] [pianist] [bassist] [blues] [tone] [clarinet] [spontaneous improvisation]	n/a

Cells showing n/a indicate that no sample was available.

High Level, Specialised Musical Terminology Occurring in Content Analysis of Articles across all Years, Genres and Publications

		Classical, Early, Contemporary, Contemporary Classical	Rock and Pop	Jazz	Roots
1981	<i>The Times</i>	[scoring] [upper register] [pedal resonance] [keys]	[a medium 7/4 tempo] [Hammond organ] [chording]	[cross-sticking] [tom-tom rudiments] [eight bars] [fills] [tenor saxophonist] [alto saxophonist] [bass trombonist] [baritone saxophonist]	[ballads]
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[coda] [contra bassoon] [pianissimos] [basset horn]	None	[slurred phrasing] [tenor] [mute]	[zither] [moveable bridges] [Pentatonic scales] [timbres] [vibrato]
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[score] [a capella chorus] [laments and melismas] [timbres] [soprano saxophone]	[staccato] [slur] [muted trumpet] [tenor] [dynamics] [ornamentation]	[muted trumpet]	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	[score] [pivot notes] [sonorities] [feeling for line] [concertante] [upper strings]	n/a	n/a	n/a
1987	<i>The Times</i>	[bar] [coda] [counterpoint] [pick-ups] [symphony] [score]	None	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[a measured andante] [allegro] [a flowing 6/8] [march-like contralto solo] [top register] [tenor] [thick textures]	[pitch]	[late-bop] [polyrhythmics] [harmonics] [fortissimo] [overblown] [chordal accents] [tenor]	None
	<i>The Independent</i>	[symphony ensemble] [inner parts] [concerto instrument] [fortepiano] [keys] [andante] [legato phrasing] [timbre] [rondo] [piano concertos] [Steinway]	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[“symphonic meditation”] [chorale harmony] [asymmetrical rhythms] [upper strings] [harmonic resonances] [wind instruments and metallic percussion] [strokes of the tam-tam] [tonality] [gamelan] [concertino of percussion] [the key of A major]	[staccato flourishes] [vibrato]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	[note values] [pitches] [serialism] [melodic] [harmonic] [timbres]	[sax breaks]	[close-harmony riffs] [four-in-a-bar with brushes]	n/a

1991	<i>The Times</i>	[tempi] [baton] [Adagio] [Andante] [cadenza] [Andantino] [harpsichord continuo] [aria] [Concerto] [concertos] [symphonies] [crescendo]	[Marshall speaker] [double bass-drum]	[reeds player] [upper register] [bop player] [troubadour] [rhythm sections]	n/a
	<i>The Guardian</i>	[mini cadenza] [codas] [bowings] [horns' motif]	[four-square]	[semi-quavers] [flugelhorn] [riffs] [all registers] [post-bebop trumpeters] [tenor saxophone]	[griot] [lute-like kora] [ngoni] [talking drum]
	<i>The Independent</i>	[contrapuntal] [counterpoint] [treble] [contralto] [soprano] [intonation] [tenor]	[octaves]	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	[oratorio] [dissonance] [tutti] [polyphonic] [plectrum] [antiphonally subdivided orchestral parts] [part-writing] [harmonic]	None	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Observer</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	[symphonic form] [classical repertory] [chamber group] [sextet] [score]	[falsetto] [octaves] [sotto]	[soprano saxophone]	n/a

Cells showing n/a indicate that no sample was available.

Summary of Interview Dates and Locations

Interviewee	Interview Date	Interview Location
David Sinclair	27.03.06	The Defectors Weld, London
Dave Gelly	28.03.06	Goldsmiths College, London
Richard Cook	01.06.06	Interviewee's home, London
Robert Sandall	27.06.06	Interviewee's workplace, London
Clive Davis	02.08.06	The Bel and Dragon, Cookham
Nicholas Kenyon, CBE	15.08.06	Interviewee's workplace, London
Tom Sutcliffe	26.08.06	Interviewee's home, London
Meredith Oakes	26.08.06	Interviewee's home, London
Bayan Northcott	04.09.06	Interviewee's home, London
Robin Denselow	14.09.06	Interviewee's home, London
Hilary Finch	25.09.06	Thistle Victoria Hotel, London
Paul Griffiths	18.10.06	Telephone interview
Fiona Maddocks	25.10.06	Interviewee's home, Oxford
Edward Greenfield	14.08.01	Interviewee's home, location unknown*

* This interview was conducted by Stephen Moss and is held within *The Guardian* archives.

Interview with Richard Cook
At his home in London. 1st June 2006

Part A

So just to kick off, how would you describe your style of writing at the time you were at the *Sunday Times*. I think you started 1987? Yes that sounds about right. How would you describe your style of writing from 1987-91.

1992 I think was the date I actually stopped.

Ah, my database stops at 1991.

I stopped then because I got a job in the actual record industry. I began working with Polygram and I think we felt at the time it was inappropriate for me, well having said that it never stopped Robert Sandall from carrying on working, but still, even though he was being paid by Virgin Records, but still. My style. I don't think my style changed very much. Previously my main writing had been for the *NME*. My first piece for them was in 1979, and the last one was in around 1986 because then I went over to *Sounds* for a little bit after that. It's pretty difficult to say really. I suppose, what I wanted to try and get across was a mixture of things which I think are basically fundamental to how a music writer's going to have to really ply their trade. You have to get across an enthusiasm for your subject, so you've got to be fan-ish to some extent, but you've also got to be authoritative. You've got to give the impression, I think, that you know probably quite a lot more about it than anybody else who's reading it, so you've got to be authoritative rather than authoritarian. You've got to have something to say as well, not just 'this was great' you know. Anyone can say 'this was great', but why was it great? So it's a mixture of expertise, descriptive powers, enthusiasm, and I suppose whatever writerly skill, however you quantify that, you can stir into it as well. You need a good command of language, you need to try and say things which other people are not saying, so it's a mix of all those things. How that would have come out I don't know, and I tended to be quite, not a terribly humorous writer, although everyone makes the odd joke, you've got to get that across. So it was a style which I really wanted to make people think 'this guy knows what he's talking about'. You've got to try and make people believe that what you're saying is basically right, not that you're saying something for the sheer devilment or that you're saying something because it's a chi chi fashionable thing to say. You've got to adopt a position of individuality, but it's informed by whatever wisdom you've gleaned in your background. I always liked it when, I think someone once said to me 'you sometimes write as if you've heard every record ever made', I thought that's great actually. That's an almost ideal position to work from, because it does tend, in a sense, critics are sort of fairly omnipotent people, or they think they are. I mean how dare critics speak from this lofty position saying 'I will tell you whether it's good or not'. There's no real qualification, you can't pass an exam to be a critic as far as I'm aware (4m34). So you are setting yourself up, and you've got to have pretty good credentials to actually do that, and my position was that when I worked at the *NME* I was the person that knew about jazz, no one else at the *NME* really knew much about jazz at all while I was there. And because I knew quite a bit about rock as well that made me an all-rounder, as it were. I didn't have too many rivals in that regard, in terms of breadth of knowledge. I mean other people knew more about certain aspects of rock than me, or reggae or whatever it may be, but I had one of the best, I think, one of the best all-round funds of knowledge there. That didn't make me the best writer by a long way, but I felt I could use that position of knowledge. I kind of used that when I went forward onto the *Sunday Times* as well, I mean you're writing for a different audience there inevitably, you're not writing for a specialist audience. Having said that I don't know to what extent the *NME* audience is really a specialist audience anyway. I tend to think that most of the people that bought the *NME* in that period were not necessarily music specialists, they were just people who liked music, and I never really felt that you were necessarily talking to a whole audience of music obsessives.

I was going to ask actually what factors shaped your style of writing? I mean did you consciously absorb another style?

I think it was other people's music writing. I've never been a great reader of fiction, well not since I left school anyway. I'm not a very educated man, I don't have any university education, I consider myself to be a person of pretty average intelligence. I don't have a tremendous interest in all the areas of the arts. I like music, I used to write about film actually when I was at the *NME*, but I haven't written about film in many years, and I've pretty much stopped going to the cinema many years ago as

well. So I don't feel as if I have a tremendously broad cultural remit, as it were. But I do know about music, I know a lot about music, I know a lot about lots of different kinds of music as well.

So you said that other people's writing influenced you?

So I read a lot of music criticism was what I'm saying. Before I even was old enough to read the, well actually I did get the *NME* in the 60s but it was just like a *Smash Hits* sort of paper then. But the first music criticism I read was *A Criticism of Jazz* because I used to read things like *Jazz and Blues* and *Jazz Monthly*. *Jazz Monthly* was what it was before it became *Jazz and Blues*. And I also read *The Gramophone*, I read classical music criticism. So I read an awful lot of record reviews before I started writing, and I felt I had a pretty good grasp of what a record review should do, what it should say. (7m51)

So you said you weren't really reading the *NME* in the 60s, it was mostly jazz publications?

To begin with, yes, and then later on in the mid 70s I did start to look at the *NME* again. Pretty much between, round about 1969/70 was when I really started getting interested in jazz. I was twelve in 1969. So from then up until 73/74 I was pretty much listening to jazz and classical music, I didn't really keep up with pop and rock at all. Then my friends at school were much more interested in pop and rock, so I got more interested in that again, round about that time, and then jazz and classical music drifted into the background somewhat so rock and jazz were pretty much fighting for my listening time from round about 1974 onwards. At that time, the only way you can do that was to teach yourself about it by reading music magazines. There wasn't much music on television at that time, and you certainly couldn't do a course on it, in terms of musical appreciation. I don't think there was anything like that in colleges. I mean there were music colleges and music courses but that's about technical stuff. Courses about music appreciation were pretty thin on the ground, as far as I know. So you had to find out for yourself, and we're talking about the early 1970s here and it was quite difficult actually. You'd have to listen to your friends records, read things like the *NME* and wonder what that sounds like, and there was Radio 1 and things like *Sounds of The 70s* on Radio 1, and *The Old Grey Whistle Test* on TV and then *Top of The Pops*. No one took *Top of The Pops* very seriously then as all that was on there were things like Sweet and glam rock, you know. But I think that kind of self-education was a good thing for me really (10m15). In a sense it gave me the tools to do what I did later on. I remember reading things like *The Penguin Guide to Classical Music*, *The Stereo Record Guide* as it was called then, and I remember very much also *The Penguin Guide to Bargain Classics* which I got out of the library. I grew up in Kew, and I got it out from Kew library, and I read that book cover to cover and what it was was a book about record reviews, which in sense was a bit meaningless, but I really felt that I started to get a grip on how you would describe music and performance on record.

So the kind of language?

The language you'd use and what's involved, and I started to put myself in the mind of what the audience, what the people want to read about in a review and so I'd think 'well what do people want to know about this record?', which is why I think, the best writing I've done has always been record reviews, because I think that's what I'm best equipped to do, rather than features and interviews with people. I mean I find interviews with people pretty absurd things, especially interviews with musicians, I mean it's very difficult actually to get them to say anything interesting for one thing.

So you said that you were reading these jazz magazines, did you feel that there was a canonical style of writing, were you fitting in with some kind of lineage, following in the footsteps of some great names?

Well yes, it would be people like, on the classical side, people like Ted Greenfield and Robert Layton. On the jazz side, Max Harrison, he was always a great mentor to me, and people like Burnett James and Don Locke. Burnett James, I think he's dead now, he was an interesting guy because he was a classical guy who also did jazz reviews, and Max Harrison was also split, he'd work entirely between classical and jazz, in fact he's stopped writing about jazz, he's just gone back to classical. So again, what I was concerned to do was really to talk about the musical content of things. I suppose that again was what really drove a lot of my writing from the beginning, was that I wanted to talk about music, I wasn't particularly interested in personalities. You look at the way rock writing has gone and it's all about personality, isn't it. I mean you look at reviews of records. I think this is why record reviews in places like the *NME* today have been shrunk down to almost nothing. If you look at the *NME* today compared to say twenty five years ago, or even twenty years ago in the record reviews section you'd get really long reviews of things, 800-1000 word reviews of albums, now they're like one paragraph.

I suppose you could argue that *Q* and *Mojo* have taken over, but even those reviews tend not to be that long. You tend to have like four or five big ones and then everything else is very small, and the writing in those reviews doesn't tend to really be much about the music. I mean you could read a review and have no idea what the record actually sounds like, and this was, it's an old fashioned point of view, but I always think that the person reading the review wants to know what the record sounds like. If you're reviewing a film they want to know what happens in the film. I mean you can be very kind of existentialist and remote about it but you're not doing your job which is...so I did adopt this old fashioned position of talking about 'what can you hear on the record?'. I mean sometimes people don't think about things like drumming anymore. What kind of style does a drummer have in a rock band? Does anyone ever discuss that anymore? If you listen to a band like Television in the 1970s, one of the remarkable things about their first record, *Marquee Moon*, I don't know if you know that record, I think that came out about 1978, one of the remarkable things, well there were two remarkable things about it for me, one is the guitars on it and the other is the drums. And I mean never mind about the songs, the singing, the overall thing. It was the guitars, Tom Verlaine and the other guy, what's his name, Richard somebody, anyway the two guitarists, and Billy Ficker who was the drummer, was a really remarkable drummer. He could play, he would play in rock time but you could tell he'd listened to jazz drummers and there was amazing stuff going on. But I think that, certainly today, you'd never read about a thing like 'wow, listen to the drums'. That's partly because drum machines have taken over from drummers a lot of the time these days, but I think that the constituent parts of music seem to me to tend to evade being talked about these days. Well again, I'll tell you another writer who was a sort of predecessor of mine if you like on the *Sunday Times*, Derek Jewell. I mean Derek was a very famous guy, he was almost like the first serious rock writer on any of the broadsheets I would think, I don't know whether there was anybody else at that time. He wrote for the *Sunday Times* in the 70s, and he also had a programme on Radio Three, which was called, what was it called, again it was one of the first serious rock criticism magazine programmes, was it called, *Sounds Interesting* or something it might have been. He used to interview people on there and then he'd also discuss new releases. And he was quite an old guy Derek. I mean I met him once in the 80s, a charming man, he'd say 'now Richard tell me what's your line on it' and 'who do you write for?', he was always very interested. But he was in his 60s, he was an older guy, he was a lot older than anybody else who was writing at that time. But he decided to bring that kind of seriousness to writing about music then. And I remember I used to eagerly wait to see what he was writing about in the *Sunday Times* every week, and that was during the heyday of prog' rock really, so he'd be writing about Yes and people like that. I think he took a bit of a back seat after punk came along. (17m48)

So Derek Jewell as well, yes, that name's cropped up before. So, I personally imagine writing for the NME and writing for the Sunday Times would be a completely different experience, but was it different, and how were you changing your style to suit the different publications?

I have to say it didn't feel that different. I mean you'd be more I suppose racy, if you could use a word like that for the *NME*. I mean you made fewer assumptions at the *NME* because you'd think whatever I'm saying people are going to know what they're talking about and so I'm using *NME* language here. Whereas in the *Sunday Times* you had to do more scene-setting. Well I was writing about jazz in the *Sunday Times*, and I didn't really write about rock there, so to that extent I suppose I was more specialist in one sense, but I was more straightforward in another, in that you can't make any assumptions about your audience with a broadsheet. The likelihood is that the person who's reading it is going to be someone who may not even be that interested in music, but their eye just happened to fall on that review and they might think 'I'll have a read of that'. On the other hand if they're going to be reading an arts page I suppose you have to assume that they have a healthy interest in the arts. So to that extent you must think well hopefully they'll know what I'm talking about if I say this sounds like so and so. (19m24)

So you're consciously writing for the more generalist reader?

The people in the arts team at the *Sunday Times* at that time, they basically trusted my knowledge. I mean the first guy who was the Arts Editor there who was John, crikey I can't remember his name now, what was his second name, it'll probably come me, but he wasn't a jazz guy at all but he basically trusted my knowledge. He sent me to the North Sea Jazz Festival, and I went to Oslo to interview Jan Garbarek and then it was David, I can't recall his name, then Helen Hawkins, who as far as I know is still there actually. She's been there for years and years. But I got to know them and I could talk to them on a weekly basis and I'd say 'what about this?'. (19m48)

Right, OK, so you were suggesting...

And they'd go, well we'd either talk about a record or a concert, there wasn't a hard and fast brief where we had to do one thing or another. (20m37)

And was that the same at the NME or was that different?

Well there you're sort of fighting for space, trying to get jazz features in, you'd have to try and... I mean Tony Stewart was the features Editor for most of time I was there and Tony liked me and I did a lot of basic straight pop work, but I'd try to get jazz pieces in and sometimes they'd go in and sometimes they wouldn't. Having said that, it's unbelievable some of the pieces I did manage to get into the *NME*, which you'd never dream of. I mean I got in pieces on people like Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, and I remember Neil Spencer saying a week after the Derek Bailey piece, I'd got a two page feature on Derek Bailey, and we had an Editorial meeting and when we came out Neil said 'well Richard, I don't believe it, two pages on Derek Bailey'. But do you know what Neil does now? He does the horoscope in *The Observer*. He's become a horoscope guy. He used to be the Editor of the *NME* when I was there, he's alright Neil, he's a good bloke. I mean the fact that he actually allowed that piece to go in was good. (21m55)

So at the NME, you were fighting to get space?

Well not fighting, I was busy with doing the straight pop stuff as well, but I was keen to try and keep jazz things going in there, because I felt it was important and I wanted to write about that sort of thing. But you couldn't push your luck, you couldn't try to get a piece like that in every week, it just wouldn't happen.

But at the Sunday Times you could be more prescriptive yourself?

Yes, I could. But remember I wasn't getting that much space, it may only have been a little piece. I very rarely got huge amounts of space at the *Sunday Times*. They didn't really have a record review section as such then. I mean now they have two pages of CD reviews or whatever. They didn't have that then. So I'd either write about a CD or album, or more often I'd do a live thing.

Yes, I saw your articles on Ella Fitzgerald and Fats Domino at the Royal Albert Hall, I read those.

Yes, Fats Domino, that was a great concert, I remember that. I remember they changed the ending of it as well, I was really annoyed. And actually David, who was the Arts Editor, he was annoyed too, because someone high up forced the change on them, and I was quite ticked off about that. One of the last pieces I did for them was Frank Sinatra's last Albert Hall concert, and which I have to say was one of the best pieces I ever wrote for the paper, although I say so myself, it was a very good piece of work. But by and large I got a little bit of space, which is appropriate for jazz, because in the end they have a long standing commitment to their classical coverage, people like Hugh Canning he's been there for years and years, and increasingly of course they've done more and more on rock. But when I started rock was still only just still creeping in to the broadsheets, well I say just creeping in, it had got in. But it wasn't as significant a fixture as it is now, and when I started at the *NME* there was virtually no rock in the broadsheets at all, so at the end of the 70s there was, well there were people like Derek Jewell, there was hardly anything really. (24m29)

I noticed that the Sunday Times was perhaps a little bit slower than The Guardian or The Independent in terms of picking up rock coverage.

It's quite likely. The *Sunday Times* was much more of an institution than it is now, in the sense that I suppose it was quite set in its ways but its readership liked that I think, I mean as far as I'm concerned it's completely in the toilet these days, the arts coverage seems so trivial to me there now. But then all people look back on things and say 'that was a golden age', it probably wasn't actually. Your study will (illuviate) that I'm sure.

So just to recap, with the Sunday Times the Editor or somebody would phone you up and say you've got 500 or words or 1000 words or something and you were given the freedom to decide, pretty much, what you would fill that with?

As far as I remember, it was much like that. I mean they didn't want me to do obscure people all the time, which is why I'd do someone like Tony Bennett, but then I wanted to do people like Tony Bennett too, I didn't want to just do obscure nobodys all the time.

But they weren't prescribing to you, they weren't saying 'I want you to cover this'?

Well only, well sometimes. If Miles Davis was coming in to do a concert they'd say 'Richard we think you should do Miles Davis', you know, and of course that's absolutely fine, why not.

Did you find that different Editors were more hands-on, so some would be maybe be quite prescriptive about what they wanted?

Well again I only really had three while I was there, the first guy, John, he was very laissez faire, I could probably get away with pretty much anything with him. Whereas David and Helen were, well David knew a bit more, they were a bit more...

So the more they knew the more prescriptive they were?

I think that tends to be the case. I think at that time it was felt that jazz merited space, which again is a big change from now. I think the problem with jazz at the moment is that it's not perceived to be particularly important in the culture overall. (27m23)

(comfort break – recorder reset to 0:00)

Jazz tends to go through periods where it's suddenly deemed to be 'oh, jazz is really exciting at the moment we must do something on it'. There was the famous period in the middle 1980s when Courtney Pine came along, and the Jazz Warriors, Loose Tubes, Andy Shepherd, Steve Williamson, Philip Benn. There was a whole school of people who seemed to emerge from nowhere, they hadn't, it wasn't really like that, but they were on the cover of supplements and it was perceived to be a big jazz revival. Then it faded away, and actually jazz has not really got much back on the agenda until the pretty dreadful Jamie Cullum phenomenon in the last few years. But that's dying away now as well. Again a lot of singers came forward and seemed ready to be stars, but actually it's faded away quite quickly, I think Cullum himself, you could argue that his career is, well he's treading water at the moment. So it's only when things like that happen, I mean he was all over the supplements for a little while but you sort of think well that was it, that was jazz's little moment. As far as I'm concerned he's not even a jazz musician as such. So you've got a period now where jazz really struggles to find a foothold in the national press. (interruption, 1m37-1m58)

Where was I? Well again, around about the late 80s people felt that jazz was important enough on its own terms, that it should be allotted some regular space. Unfortunately for jazz I just don't think that's true anymore, I think Arts Editors on the broadsheets now just think well, there's not that much interesting enough going on in jazz, we'll have a very occasional piece but we're certainly not going to give it regular coverage.

So if you'd been writing about rock with the NME and then jazz with the Sunday Times, were you really changing your style of writing. I know you've said already about the specialist and non-specialist reader, but I'm thinking about the language that you used with rock writing and jazz writing or the kind of things you'd home in on to write about?

It didn't really change for me. Again, if I was reviewing a record I'd try to give people an idea about what the record sounded like.

And that was whether it was rock or jazz or whatever?

Yes I do. If I was reviewing a Cabaret Voltaire record one moment and then a David Murray jazz record the next, I think my approach is fundamentally the same. I mean that was my rather strange idea that jazz and rock deserved to be considered on the same terms and I thought it was interesting new music in that regard. (3m30)

So you said you'd read all of these jazz magazines, and that you were following in the footsteps of Burnett James and Max Harrison, so when you were writing a jazz piece were you thinking actually I need to home in on different things?

I suppose with jazz pieces they tended to be more scholarly in that regard, whereas with rock stuff you can be more flippant with rock. When all's said and done, a lot of rock music is pretty hard to take seriously. I tended to take every jazz record very seriously. Whereas if you were reviewing Bow Wow Wow or someone like that, then it's a bit of a laugh isn't it, because musically speaking there wasn't that much to say about the lot of the 80s groups, in the same way there wouldn't be about today's bands, because in a sense the music isn't the point, which seems a bizarre thing to say about a record, but in the end the beat may be the only point to it. If you ask teenagers what they like about a record they'll say things that they've been saying for decades, 'it's got a good beat, I like it'. They

used to say that on *Midday Spin*, on the live programme in the 60s, and they'll still say it today about a Mary J Blige record or something like that. I think it's that sort of thing that, I mean they're not really going to be into the musical analysis of it.

So jazz perhaps was a little bit more scholarly?

Probably a bit more scholarly, a bit more historical, there's more historical reference points you'd talk about. You'd probably have to do a bit more scene setting with jazz, you know, what kind of instrumentation is this, what are they setting out to do, that sort of thing, be a bit more procedural in a sense when writing on a jazz record or a jazz concert. I mean in the end rock bands tend to be guitars and bass and drums and maybe some keyboards, they seem to be the same, whereas jazz can be anything from a big band to a saxophone quartet or something, so there's a greater variety of personnel and things like that which you've got to take into account when you're talking about what sound is coming out. (6m24)

So as I mentioned earlier, I've been trying to look at quantitative change to see if for perhaps for example rock coverage went up and jazz coverage went down, and I was wondering whether you thought there was a hierarchy between different music genres in terms of which might achieve the most page space or the best position on the page?

Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely yes.

And were you always jostling for page space with other genre writers and if so who usually won?

You're talking about the broadsheets here? Yes in the broadsheets. Well I'd always get the smallest amount of space, well inevitably, unless it was something major, I mean if it was Miles Davis that would quite likely be the lead on the page.

So it depends who you are writing about as well?

Oh completely, completely. As I say if it was Miles Davis or maybe Wynton Marsalis, one or two others, a handful of people, or Courtney Pine I suppose. People who had cache beyond the hardcore jazz audience I would say. If I was talking about Zoot Sims or someone like that then that would be a small piece at the foot of the page, or even someone like Dizzy Gillespie who was still working then. People like that would be known but they would really not be much known about except for by the hardcore jazz audience. And that's a small number of people, I mean any Editor is going to say 'we're not going to make that the lead because Rod Stewart's got a new tour', or, not a very good example. Well if it was today, if it was a choice between Zoot Sims or the Arctic Monkeys then clearly the Arctic Monkeys are going to win every time. So it's about pleasing your audience. I mean it would look absurd as well to make Zoot Sims a lead piece on a page like that and the band everyone's talking about at the foot of the page, so inevitably you're going to get much smaller space. And I was resigned to that, it was like that at the *NME*. I didn't go into the *NME* expecting jazz to get any kind of priority over an interview with Sade or something like that.

What about the classical side of things, thinking of the hierarchy, so there was opera, classical, jazz, rock pop, roots music a bit later.

Well classical music's always had, in terms of its audience, much more space than it ought to if you want to take that line. I mean, the audience for opera is very small and yet it is such a building block in the cultural establishment of this country that it gets tremendous funding and it gets tremendous media coverage. If you look at any of the Sunday papers you'll see considerable space expended on classical music coverage still. I don't think that's a bad thing, in many ways I think it's a good thing, because I'm pleased it's not entirely driven by audience numbers, having said that it's a bit unfair on jazz and on some other musics, but I mean what can you do? Certainly if it's just going to be driven entirely by audience numbers then rock is just going to dominate everything, it's going to be just like football on the sports pages, and I wouldn't be very happy about that. So I never felt a grudge against classical getting more space than jazz, because that would just be silly. It's just different, the classical audience is different. I think there's less crossover between the hardcore classical audience than with any other field, you know that's a self-sufficient audience and a self-sufficient artistic community. Whereas jazz tends to crossover now all the time with rock, people try to cross it over with rock, a bit of a folly a lot of the time, but they do try to do that.

Did you get any sense while you were at the *Sunday Times* if the hierarchy was changing in anyway?

Well certainly rock became much more involved in broadsheet coverage than it was, and the roots of that really are the fact that, it was, I think really up until as late as the early 80s people felt that rock was not a mature subject for serious newspaper coverage and if you think that, so much of it was

about chart pop, it was about The Sweet and Slade and groups like that, then you could argue well why should Arts Editors give space over to that kind of thing because there isn't that much of interest to say about it, allegedly. But the album audience, the audience for rock got older for a start it wasn't just about teenagers, there were lots of people in there 30s and 40s listening to rock and buying newspapers. It was illogical for them not to have rock coverage. The weekly newspapers were pretty serious, much more serious than they are now, and then of course you've got the rise of *Q* and again rock became much more a magazine kind of thing. So again it was logical for it to be crossed over into general arts pages. I think it was just an inexorable shift, well not shift, but an inexorable path from so called specialist coverage to general broadsheet coverage. But there's another factor which is very important, and I know you're going to ask about it later but I'll raise it now, and that is that record companies became much cleverer about marketing their artists. Again, really up to about 1980 or so, the press offices of major record companies were relatively small, they just had a few people working in them. In the 60s you basically just had independent publicists, in the 70s the companies actually had their own press offices and press departments but it was still, I would say, I mean people might correct me because I wasn't really working in the 70s, I worked at the end of the 70s, but it seems to me from a historical perspective, that companies didn't really approach the idea of press campaigns and so forth with anything like the intensity and the focus that they do now as a matter of course. It was much more laissez faire. Now, whole international campaigns are built up based around press coverage, television coverage, media beans and junkets of one sort or another, the whole concepts of MTV. I mean this is the era before MTV. Now, newspapers are specifically targeted as a matter of complete routine in press campaigns and the established writers, and indeed the Arts Editors on the national newspapers, are bombarded all the time to try and get people in those newspapers. I simply don't think that happened until there was this change. There was a change of culture at the record companies because, record press offices were pretty easy going places, I remember from when I first started getting to know some of those people, and now they are very driven intense places if you like. (15m42)

Very aggressive?

Very aggressive. They had targets in terms of 'we've got to get this person in that place', it was sort of germinating back in the, around about 1980 onwards, but it's really in the last twenty years that it's actually gone into complete overdrive. I think in many ways that's the major difference between the music press of then and now in that there's also the issue of advertising going into newspapers and music magazines.

I was going to ask you what changes did you notice with advertising?

I think, you know again, that's a major one. Magazines have to get advertising to survive. They're dependent on specialist advertising from record companies. I'm not saying that Editorial decisions are taken on the basis that we will get six pages of ads from them if we do this, but these things play a factor, it's inevitable.

Did it affect your writing as far as you're aware?

I didn't feel as if it did at all. I think it would have affected how some senior Editorial decisions would have been made, whether we had Haircut 100 on the cover this week depends on are we going to get a full page colour advert for them, or something like that. I'm not saying that that happened, but it's quite likely that it entered into the calculations, let's put it that way. But I wasn't a senior Editor at that time. I was basically a freelance, my whole time with the *NME* I was a freelance, never once on the actual staff there, and as a stringer you would not really take those sort of things into account very much, maybe that's naïve but looking back on it now, no I never really felt that I pulled a punch in a review simply because I thought it might upset Warner Brothers or something like that.

So you always considered yourself quite independent from all of that, you didn't get the Editor on the phone saying 'you can't say that because we're going to run an advert that week'?

No, it's possible that my copy might have been softened at some point in the Editorial process, but even then I can't remember an example of that. (18m18)

... (the question and response which appeared here in the original transcript were removed at the interviewees request in order to preserve confidentiality) ...

So was there a sense that there was perhaps much more artistic freedom about what you wrote?
Yes there was, and also I think there were more loopholes in those days. I think that just would have been spotted and taken out today.

So in the 80s, the late 80s period, could that have happened then do you think in the broadsheets or were things tight then?

No I don't think so, the broadsheets were tighter. It would go past several people.

Did you ever see any of your articles pushed out of the way to make room for an advert? Does that happen?

It probably happened but again I can't remember thinking 'oh my God that's been dropped'.

You weren't loosing lots of money? They weren't commissioning you to write things and then all of a sudden it'd get pushed out of the way and you'd get a kill fee?

Maybe I was just very fortunate but I hardly ever wasted my time at the *NME* in the sense that I wrote lots of stuff that didn't get in. Very rarely happened. (21m10)

And at the *Sunday Times* was it the same?

Sunday Times, again maybe a handful of times but again, I think they were sufficiently on the case to know what was going to happen on the page to not waste their time commissioning me to do something that wasn't going to get in. (21m32).

Just quickly, did you notice any changes in the types of articles that were being published in the *Sunday Times* during that period? So were there more features appearing, or more previews or obituaries? I spotted that there may have been more charts appearing?

Well I have to say no, it's a while ago, I'll have to think about it. They didn't really, again the change of pace was slower than it probably has become later, so you wouldn't suddenly see a major revamp of the Editorial section it just didn't work that way. There were small incremental changes I think, and just occasional things might happen. But there wouldn't be any dramatic changes, and I wouldn't suddenly think 'oh God, they've got a lot more previews coming in'.

When I first started doing this research I was wondering if perhaps early on everybody was writing reviews but then with the changes in marketing and promotion if by the end of the decade everybody was suddenly writing previews?

That's a fair point and I suspect it was certainly moving in that direction but not in a wholesale sort of way, it was slower. (23m08)

We've already touched upon some of the next subject that I wanted to talk about, and that's the idea of whether or not there ever was a golden age and whether things have declined during or after the 1980s. It's often said that rock music criticism declined during the 1980s. Is it? But I wondered if you have any sense of there being a decline in the quality of jazz music journalism, either at that time or later?

Well, jazz writing in this country has by and large been pretty poor, I'd say. There were good people on those magazines, people like Max Harrison and so forth. But my experience of broadsheet jazz writers has been, most of them are a pretty poor lot and I think the people who are writing today, the only one with any quality at all is John Fordham. I mean Dave Gelly hardly writes anything any more anyway, and Jack Masserick is a bit of a clown if you ask me, and Clive Davis is one of the worst writers on music I can think of. Terrible writing, he writes for the *Times* and the *Sunday Times*. I mean it's scandalous, the man isn't really even a jazz fan, in many ways. So I think the quality, I mean one reason why the jazz audience is backward in this country is that it's not well looked after, the journalism that it's given is very poor in my humble opinion. There are good writers around but they're not writing for the broadsheets for the most part. They write for me and my *Jazz Review* magazine. There's people like, excluding myself, Brian Morton and Martin Longley does a bit actually, he's done a few bits and bobs in *The Independent*, Philip Clark, Chris Sheridan. There are lots of good writers, but they're all writing for me and my magazine and any one of those people I think would make a good broadsheet jazz critic but they're not there. The people that are doing it at the moment for whatever reason are not the right people. I just think they're poor writers, they're either coming to it from the wrong perspective, they're not authoritative, they don't follow my rules if you like, they're not authoritative, they don't sound as if they know absolutely what they're taking

about. In a broadsheet situation, more than anywhere you've really got to do that, you've really got to.

So do you think things declined at a certain point or has it always been...

As I say jazz has always been a bit poor in the broadsheets. The thing is, it's not fair to say that today's rock writers or today's jazz writers aren't as good as the ones of before because they are working to a different set of criteria. A typical *NME* of 1983 say, simply could not be published today. The remit of the *NME* then and now is completely different. Now the *NME* is much more, in a sense it's closer to *Smash Hits* than it is to *Q* or *MOJO*, it's much more about gossipy chart stuff and it's kind of regressed in time. That's not necessarily a comment on the quality of the writing, that's the Editorial perspective of it, that's how the publishers of the paper want it to be, how they think they'll get the most advertising, how they think they can best address their audience. In the early 80s before there was *Q* and *MOJO*, the *NME* was the outlet for serious, if you like, rock criticism. Because there was no other outlet for it then. So it was about so-called serious rock writing. However, if you ask today's staffers on the *NME* to go back to that style, whether they could do it or not I don't know, but then they're not asked to do that. So to that extent I don't think it's particularly fair to say that, having said that there are some outstanding writers there, like Barney Hoskyns and Andy Gill, I mean Andy's still writing for *The Independent*. Barney is still writing for the, what does he do now, he writes books and he does a bit of magazine writing I think, and Chris Bohn who's now the Editor of *The Wire*, these are still outstanding writers and they're still finding outlets for their work and good for them. But whether there are people of that calibre today I don't really know actually, because I don't really follow rock writing these days. I don't spend any time reading the *NME*. (28m34)

There just seems to be this recurring sense that it was more serious and there were these 'think pieces' being written then and now it's all the same and more gossipy.

Well you wouldn't get a think-piece in the *NME* at all would you. I mean it's almost like, well it's not like *The Sun*, but they have lots of silly pieces in there about, you know, how much drinking some band does on the road. I mean that wouldn't have been on the page in 1983. Also, there's this strange obsession with charts which again you never had before. But 'the 100 most outrageous events in rock history' and the 100 you know, whatever it might be, endless list-based features, and that's been so done to death now I just think well, is there really an appetite for it? Well there must be or they wouldn't keep doing it. That was a *Q* thing really, they started that, because *Q* has always been really list orientated I think. Even the way they approach their review sections, that was almost like a list of records coming out and all the reviews would be the same size and it was A to Z, so even from the word go *Q* was really quite list orientated. (30m)

I was going to ask about newly emerging publications, so *Q*, and then *The Independent*, and *The Independent on Sunday* and then later *The Modern Review*. Did any of those, as far you are aware, affect broadsheet music writing?

Well I think the big shift in rock writing came along when *Q*, more specifically Mark Ellen and David Hepworth, decided that they wanted, well the Editorial style of *Q* was on the one hand serious and well-informed but on the other very lightweight and flippant. And somehow they managed to marry those two apparently opposite approaches. So you got the appearance of something quite serious and well-informed but the timbre of it, the mood of it, was actually rather lightweight and 'ah, it's all a bit of a laugh', and that kind of thing, 'we love music but we don't take it at all seriously', that was almost the attitude. In a sense that carried over into the broadsheets. As far as I'm concerned, Ellen and Hepworth were a disastrous influence on music writing because for me I approach it seriously, I'm a serious guy, even though I like to have a laugh, and I don't think that what they did was, well, it created basically a style of writing which has become the norm, which is to have a veneer of well-informed heavy weight criticism but underneath to be very lightweight and flimsy actually, and I find that an approach to despise really.

What about *The Independent* when that came along did that have a massive effect on what you were doing at the *Sunday Times*?

It had no effect on me whatsoever.

They weren't phoning you up and suddenly asking for different things?

I'm trying to remember what *The Independent* was like back then. I mean what was your impression of it at that period? (32m25)

I thought that it shifted a lot. It seemed to start out quite heavily interested in rock and pop, but it seemed as if the, I can't remember the name of the Editor now, as if they weren't quite sure who their readership was, and it seemed to be quite versatile with styles and didn't quite know where it was going to start with. It seemed to be trying to settle in and experimented with lots of different things. I know they were really keen on music obituaries.

They always have been haven't they? They've got Steve Voce to do the jazz ones, Steve's all right. But I honestly don't think it had any impact upon what other people were doing. You'd have to talk to Arts Editors really to get a judgement on that because I think contributors just carried on their own sweet way, whatever they were doing. But Arts Editors may have said 'look *The Independent* is doing this, we've got to do this'. They wouldn't have said that to someone like me. They would've just said 'what are you doing Richard?' or 'maybe you should do so and so this week' or whatever. (33m42)

Again just quickly, did you consider writing for the broadsheets to be a better or worse position to be in than writing for the specialist music press, and why?

Well I think you felt that you had more stature if you wrote for a broadsheet. If you are at the *NME* you were just one of twenty guys, there weren't many women then. Whereas if you were the jazz guy on the *Sunday Times* that was pretty good actually. Well I didn't particularly make a lot of money out of it because I didn't get much coverage but I think you felt that it opened (the prestige?) Yes, and you would immediately go to the top of somebody's list as an important press person in that scenario because they could get something in the *Sunday Times* on Miles Davis or whatever if you could get through to Richard or whatever it might be. So I think to that extent, you know, if you talk to the people who do jazz PR today for instance their important people to people to talk to are people like John Fordham at *The Guardian* because they stand a chance of getting something in *The Guardian*. Which is good for jazz. There's no jazz at all in the so-called specialist magazines now, and even *Mojo* doesn't really have any jazz any more, they just do the occasional little review.

Can you think of any way in which the broadsheet writers may have affected or influenced the specialist press? I kind of get the impression that perhaps the broadsheet writers, with the emphasis on rock and pop in the broadsheets coming along a bit later, that they may have taken their cue from the specialist press. But I wonder if the specialist press took anything back from the broadsheet writers, or if they influenced the specialist press in any way?

Not as a cultural exchange, no. I mean there may have been a writer, a writer who was influential, someone on the broadsheets who may have influenced other writers in the press, but again it's hard to think of an example of that. Because the era of someone like Derek Jewell was over, where he was almost a guy working on his own in the field. By the late 80s certainly all the broadsheets had different people doing different stuff.

So maybe they were firmly fixed in their separate camps, with different styles.

And a lot of them came from the specialist music press anyway, someone like Andy Gill was a staffer at the *NME* for years and then shifted over to *The Independent*.

Yes, there's not many people going the other way.

No, I mean you kind of start off as a kind of club reporter or something on the *NME* and then go on from there. I'd be interested to know what the average age of an *NME* writer is now, it was a bit older I think back in the early 1980s. I mean I was, how old was I? Well I only started more or less full time as a writer in 1982. I was twenty five then. I would think the *NME*, well even then there were some very young, I mean Gavin Martin was only about twenty one, but the senior people, Neil Spencer, Phil McNeil, Tony Stewart, they were all in their late 30s, early 40s and they'd been around for a bit. Roy Carr, he's been around since, God how old is Roy now, he must be in his late 60s or something. Fred Dellar from *MOJO* he was on the *NME* doing stuff back then, and how old is Fred, he must be about 70 now I suppose, God bless him.

So from the specialist press to the broadsheets, it was a step up.

Yes, you'd have to look at it like that. As I say you'd just be one of many *NME* right stringers, you know. But to go from there to be the rock person or the jazz person for *The Telegraph* or whatever it might be, you know. One thing you could look into is when do music writers retire? I mean, I basically stopped writing about rock quite some time ago, partly because I don't suppose anybody really wants me to write about it anymore anyway, but I'm too old for it. I'm almost 50 years old now, and in the end there's something silly about a 50 year old man writing about the Arctic Monkeys if you ask me. You might think you can relate to those people and that music and their audience, but

you can't. You're taking a really outside look at something which you are not part of, it's as simple as that. You can think that you enjoy the music or something, maybe you do, but how can you? You're an old man compared to that band and its audience and everything it does and everything about it. I think, really, the same way that, well some rock musicians seem to want to go on forever as well, but I think rock writers really do need to stop at a certain point because it becomes, again, why would you? I used to say at the *NME*, 'rock writers come and rock writers go but a jazz writer goes on forever'. But I think with jazz you can in theory go on forever because jazz isn't youth music, it can be, but it's not per se. Rock is in the end youth music and I think it's pathetic that people want to go and see the Rolling Stones but they do and it continues to make them a lot of money. And I suppose I could write about the Rolling Stones because they're even older than I am. But I just think it's silly. Possibly I could do the Arctic Monkeys, but I would certainly have nothing to say about Britney Spears. There's just nothing for me to say that has any, again, that's one of the difficult things adopting my position about record reviews, or what I said at the beginning about how I address a particular record, adopting that to most of what is in the charts now because so many of those records are rehashes of old songs and are productions made to a very, very specific remit to do with radio play, MTV and everything like that. I mean, again, that's a shift between the pop music of then and now because the most manufactured record of 1983 is nothing like as manufactured as today's most manufactured band. (41m26)

I was going to ask if you felt that the quality of your writing depended in some way on the quality of the bands or the performers that you were covering. You happened to say that one of the articles you were really happy with was a Frank Sinatra article, and he's a big name, I wondered if there's a correlation?

I think you have to say yes, because there's just more to say. I mean, in the end, if you look back at some of the people who were popular around about the time I was big at the *NME*, and it was people like Haircut 100 and Rick Astley, Nick Kershaw, I did an interview with Nick Kershaw I remember that. He was a nice enough man, but there was very little to say about him. But it's become so personality driven now, there's just so much stuff about that has got nothing to do with whether these people are musicians or not, and the musicality of it.

I remember all the fuss about the Pet Shop Boys when they came out and there being some fuss about whether they were musicians.

It's funny I remember Neil Tennant very well because he used to be a writer, he was on *Smash Hits*. I was on a trip with him once to do Squeeze in Stockholm that was, and he hadn't given up his job yet, not his job as a *Smash Hits* writer, he was working in a bookshop or something then before he even became a pop star. And I remember him saying to me 'do you think I should go full time as a writer Richard?' And I said 'well I wouldn't advise anyone to do it Neil, because I think it's difficult, it's hard work and it's difficult to make a living'. He didn't take my advice though.

There's a book by Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write* with lots and lots of quotes from different music writers.

Oh yes, I'm in there actually, I'm only in there a couple of times because, it's rather my own fault, he sent me all those questionnaires and I actually put very throw away answers to most of them, and he probably thought 'he's not bothering at all'.

Well he seems to be implying that possibly, well in his forward, and there's the forward by Charles Shaar Murray as well, saying about the 80s and how rock criticism declined. And there seemed to be an implication there that it might have been to do with the quality of the acts declining and that's possibly why there was this downward turn in the quality of rock criticism, the music isn't as good and therefore the writing isn't as good.

No I don't that's true. I think that's just people thinking that whatever age they were part of was the real golden age. Charlie Murray and Nick Kent were the golden age of the 1970s, although Charlie has carried on ever since of course. It didn't decline in the 80s, it changed, but you know as I say there were some of the best writers there's ever been like Barney and Chris and Andy, they did most of their work in the 1980s so you couldn't call that a decline. I think when *Q* came along that did start a sort of decline because I just think that was the start of the really shallow approach to rock writing. Whereas in the 70s and I suppose the first half of the 80s at least you got the sense there was, I don't know, people were sort of still struggling with, in a sense it was still an emerging culture wasn't it. The thing now is that pop music and rock and roll have been around for along time now and you could say it's exhausted its options for innovation and breaking new ground, and to that extent the writing is

going to mirror that as well because the writing has exhausted its options for innovation and breaking new ground. Which is a bit like saying it's the death of the novel or the end of the symphony just because these forms have been around for a long time doesn't mean they're exhausted, but it does make it more difficult. It makes it more difficult to come up with new fresh things. (45m58)

The Wapping Dispute...

Yes, this is a difficult one, I don't know what to say about this at all, but go on, ask me.

Did the industrial climate of that time and the Wapping Dispute, affect your writing and/ or your career in any way?

No, not at all. Funnily enough I did start at the *Sunday Times* just about the time of Wapping and a couple of my more militant friends were pretty unhappy about it. I mean people tell me and paint such a black picture of how the print unions were that I sort of thought well, with hindsight I mean looking back on it now it's difficult to say really. I don't really know how Wapping has been set in history now as to whether it was a real vicious victory of management over workers or what. It's a bit like Thatcher and the miners, and things like that. I suppose there's just an ambivalence about it, and ambiguity about it, and different sides to the same story. At the time I have to say it certainly didn't affect me as a writer.

I mean with the technology changes were you able to submit your work down a phone line or something like that?

Yes, copytakers. You'd phone them up and they'd say 'Copytakers, hello' (Oh, an actual person?)

Yes and you'd be reading stuff out to them over the phone. Sometimes I'd have to turn a review around within a couple of hours of having seen a concert or something so it would be in the next available paper. I did that many times.

So was that before Wapping or afterwards?

That would be after. (48m)

And Thatcherism, I wondered if that affected your writing or career in anyway? I read that there was perhaps less funding for the arts and I wondered if that influenced the kind of material that was out there to review?

I can't say anything. Well it obviously did if there was a more restrictive amount of stuff that you could choose to cover but in the end you just did whatever was out there. There were probably other things opening up as well. It would be interesting to consider to what extent music writing was affected by things like the decline of live music venues in pubs, pub rock, and that whole culture of pub rock as it was. That went into a great decline. At the time when I used to go to places like the Hope and Anchor and The Nashville, all these places have long, long since disappeared. And also another great change was club culture coming into being. I mean when I was a teenager if you went out you went out to hear a band, you didn't go out to hear people playing records, but ten years later people started going out to hear people playing records, because people went to clubs. And that's hard to write about actually. That kind of thing had a big impact on music writing in the sense that fewer people read it. I mean if you think about the circulation of the *NME*, which was huge at the end of the 1970s, and then it just gradually declined steadily ever since, and part of that's because people don't want to read about bands so much any more, there's an awful lot of young people don't even want to go and see live bands, they want to go to clubs. They're interested in dance music which is not about live music at all, it's about DJs and production and all the rest of it. So to that extent, music journalists never really came to terms with that because you can't really write about club culture, not in the same way. (50m48)

I'm trying to think when that was from, was it early 90s?

Well the end of the 80s, acid house, and things like that. It would be the end of the 80s really, well it was happening through the 80s. A band like Culture Club was almost, well you wouldn't hear any of those records in clubs, they were far too tame, they seemed like tame pop records, but people like Boy George were club goers, they weren't people who went to see bands. They came out of the club scene, it happened that he went into a band as a singer. But you then got clubs, Steve Strange's club, The Camden Palace and that sort of thing. That was the start of club culture and then the New Romantic thing. Those are people who didn't necessarily want to follow bands, they wanted to be seen in club environments, and eventually that led on to club culture and dance music and everything

else. And music journalism again couldn't really compete with that or didn't find a way of making that viable alongside features on Big Country and groups like that. (52m19)

So the Wapping Dispute didn't have a massive effect, Thatcherism you don't remember having a massive effect, but some of these other things like the decline of live music in venues and club culture they perhaps had more of a significant effect?

I think so. It's hard to know how to quantify that, but it's an issue there for looking at.

You've already mentioned about MTV, but I was going to ask about technology change and media changes, video recorders, stereo, compact discs, did they have a massive impact on what you were writing? I guess you were just getting sent CDs perhaps instead of records?

I remember in the beginning it was very hard to get CDs out of companies. There was a long period where albums came out on vinyl and on CD and they would never send you the CD version to start with, you'd only ever get vinyl. CD was much too expensive for that. Eventually that changed and of course things got cheaper and cheaper. But I remember there were all sorts of growing pains with the CD, a lot of journalists didn't have CD players to start with, it was expensive technology to begin with. But eventually, well very quickly actually, that changed. But you can't point to anything like that having a particular impact on music writing, it was just part of the change, of the culture evolving which writers had to deal with I suppose.

(Comfort break, recorder reset to 0:00)

One more question before I ask about employment.

So in that period when you were writing for the *Sunday Times*, how did you perceive your relationship with the readers, the music industry, publishers and artists. Whose side were you on? You've already said earlier on about the way you wanted to get across to the reader, I mean would you say that you were on the reader's side if you like?

Oh I think so, yes. You've got this rather strange situation when you're a music writer where you are a kind of go-between, between the industry and the people who are buying the industry's product.

Yes and then there's your Editor as well, and I sort of see you in the middle. I'm trying to work out where your priorities lay?

I think most music writers feel that they are sort of independent spirits who like to speak their own mind. Now, whether that's true or not is another matter, I think to some greater or lesser extent we are conditioned by the circumstances of what we're writing about. Most PR's tend to have their pet journalists who they get on best with, and the ones they find most cooperative shall we say. And if a PR sends you on a trip to do an artist and you have a nice time on the trip you're not going to come home and write a real slag off piece about them, probably. So there is a complicit aspect to the relationship which is very hard, it can be very hard to be independent about it and retain your independent vision. I think time and again you see situations where it's quite obvious that this is almost like a set-up piece actually. Because in a sense what do people think are going to happen, if you're a fan of the band, they're not going to send someone who really hates the band to do a feature on them, unless it's a deliberate confrontational situation, they're going to send someone who's got some sympathy towards that artist or their music or whatever it might be.

Is it the PR who decides or the Editor who chooses?

Oh the Editor would make the decision, yes. But the PR might say to the Editor 'look so and so is pretty keen on the group', and he'll say 'oh, is he, OK I'll ask him about it then and see what he thinks' and things like that. I mean in the situation where you're the only one, if you're on a broadsheet and you are the jazz writer or whatever it might be, then you are going to be the all powerful one which again is why PR's are really going to go out of their way to really get you interested in something. I mean it is not a lily white relationship, it can't be. I suppose if you're the writer then you have to try and put as honest a spin on it as you possibly can. I mean what I've tended to do over the years is, if I really dislike something, I don't write about it. I mean if a PR's really trying to sell me on something and I simply think it stinks, the likeliest thing is I'll just say to them 'I'm sorry I really don't like it, there's really no point me writing about it'. Having said that, you've got to be careful that you don't do that all the time. You've got to sometimes give bad reviews to people because otherwise if you're just constantly saying everything's great then people are not going to believe you are they? Well I wouldn't believe you.

Yes we do still sometimes read bad reviews

Well there are, well like I said, there have to be. If I gave a good review to everything, I mean this is John's great weakness I think, at *The Guardian*, John Fordham. John, to my knowledge, has never given a bad review, certainly to a British jazz musician. It's almost as if he thinks it's letting the side down, he'd be traitor if he did it. I think that frankly that's, well it makes you vulnerable because, well if you read it on a regular basis you think 'well do you actually like everything John?'. Because if there isn't a balance there then when you really say something is great it's not going to carry anything like the same weight is it? So to that extent, I think you have to be as honest as you can, and you just have to be in a situation where you want to be fair and even handed about it, but there's no point in just being beige about everything. I would rather read opinionated writing than really sort of soft-core, everything is good, kind of writing, even if I don't agree with that opinion. (5m33)

... (Part B) ...

Is there anything else that you think I should have covered?

You haven't asked me why I got into it? Yes if you've got time. Because I've always been a record collector, I think that was the reason. I started collecting records when I was very young. Any sort of record? 78s, they're somewhere over there in the corner. I've got a lot more than that.

Was it jazz or pop records?

Anything when I started, that was when I was about six or seven. I used to go to jumble sales just looking for them. Then I moved on to LPs and singles. I'd always, well I'd bought the music papers and I was always interested in the idea that you got records for nothing when you reviewed records, I thought 'cor, they send you free copies of LPs, that's great' (Ah so it was the lure of the freebies) and I remember I wrote to the *NME* in 1979, saying why don't you have more jazz in the paper, I was twenty two. And they used to have this guy called Brian Case who's a great jazz writer actually, he used to work for the *NME* then he left and he went to work for *Time Out*. And after he stopped there was no jazz at all, and Brian left about 76, so there hadn't really been any jazz in the paper for about two or three years. And Angus McKinnon who was the albums Editor got my letter and he got in touch and he said 'that sounds like a good idea, why don't you come in and talk to me about it', and I thought 'this is exciting', and again it was just lucky really. Because Angus likes jazz but he didn't do any jazz writing himself, and he said 'well why don't you just do the odd review and I'll see if I can get them in' and I did, and it all sort of started from there. And I'd get sent jazz LPs for nothing and I thought 'this is great' you know. I was a civil servant then and being a music writer seemed a lot more glamorous and exciting, although I was sorry to leave my job actually because I enjoyed that too. Then in 1982 I decided to go, well I was getting more and more offers of work, I'd started doing rock at this point as well as jazz writing, and I thought well I'll just knock it on the head and try and make a go of being a freelance, I could always go back to being a civil servant, I mean it was a job for life in those days, and I stuck it out and it went on from there. So I always think it was from collecting records really that I got into it. I'm completely self-taught, well apart from my school education of course. But I think it was more of matter of as I say absorbing all those thousands of reviews I read, all those thousands of music pieces I'd read and I suppose there's nothing very original in my style. I don't think I'm a very original thinker or that I do anything innovative. I mean in some ways I'm quite boring as a writer. But I think that I just really approached it from a certain perspective which maybe not many other music writers, and certainly very few music writers do today, in that I tried to be quite analytical and I think that comes from the jazz background really because you have to do that with jazz because there's very little image around jazz, it's very much about music for music's sake, it's not so much even about music for entertainments sake.

Did you play anything at all, were you musical? I'm not very musical at all. I used to make a lot of noise on a saxophone, since then I've tried to take up the trombone but I'm pretty useless at that as well. So no, I don't really play. And technically I've got a smattering of musical education but I also think I'm a bit ignorant on that too.

So you didn't have to go through all your Associated Board exams and grades?

No, never had a single lesson, everything I picked up has been self taught. Never had a piano lesson. I wish I learned the piano. I think if you're going to adopt the sort of approach that I do, you do need musical knowledge, you need to know what a chord is and things like that. I think a lot of very basic stuff is just not known, but again, and I sound really intolerant, but I do think it's important that you know a certain amount of that at least to enrich what you're talking about.

And I guess if you were reading all those jazz reviews, you were picking it up through that route?
There's that too, very much so. You understand things like a walking bass and what a four: four beat is, and things like that. But I think it's that kind of thing that actually helps, and as I say, relatively few people writing about rock music actually try to involve that kind of thing as well. There's all sorts of interesting things to talk about, about rock records, to do with the playing, I think, which are not really talked about much at all, it seems to me anyway. At least not in this current generation of writers.

The styles and the instrumentation and that kind of thing?

Well, what makes the Arctic Monkeys different from Coldplay? Now you can give a load of flannel about how Coldplay are more exciting to look at, or maybe the Arctic Monkeys are better to look at. But one thing about Coldplay is that they use, it seems to me, some quite certain approaches to harmony and also keyboard orchestration which sets them aside from certain other bands. Do people talk about that in music reviews? I don't know whether they do or not, but then I haven't read a lot of Coldplay journalism, so maybe that's a bit unfair of me. I don't know, but in the end it's just one approach, but there's the Paul Morley and Ian Penman approach which is completely different, which is much more, it's a very brainy approach. I mean that's much too clever for me, as I say I'm not brainy enough to try and do that sort of thing, so I sort of approach it from a different but, hopefully individual perspective. (39m18)

It makes me think that maybe with the 80s if pop and rock music journalism got into the broadsheets and tried to appeal to a broader audience if, 'dumbing down' is the wrong phrase really, but if the technical musicological side got dampened down?

Well you don't want to make that, get that complete upper hand. They do talk about things like that in musician-orientated magazines. You know, you've got magazines for drummers and things like that, so they do talk about the technical aspects in there, and guitar magazines. They have to because those are all about technique. But the thing to do is try to find a feasible marriage between that approach and general populist approach perhaps. (40m12)

Yes, it's a difficult balance, and then there's the academic approach, with academics talking about rock and pop.

That whole thing about being a muso is really seen as being a bad thing, I don't know. I mean we have a great writer actually, Mark Gilbert who writes for us in *Jazz Review*, and he's scathing about most popular music. His writing tends to be very much about the technical content of what's being played because he's actually a musician teacher himself. And he wrote a review of a CD that was covering the, I think covers of things like the Beatles and Bob Dylan and stuff, that's right it was one of the Warner's compilations of jazz people covering pop, in the sort of 70s and so on. And he described some jazz version of Bob Dylan's song *Blowing in the Wind*, and he said 'this at least is better than the moribund stomp of the original' and the 'lachrymose sentimentality of all of the Beatles output' you know, he just completely wiped off the most popular group of the last 100 years. That's quite enjoyable because at least he's doing it from a position of strength, he's actually backing up what he says rather than just saying the Beatles were rubbish. However, to me the idea of interesting music writing is a combination of all these things. The thing perhaps about the *NME* in the early/middle 80s was that you had a whole bunch of writers who were actually gifted writers and had very different approaches to the business of writing about music. In other words they all had a good command of language and interesting things to say but they approached it from a whole bunch of different perspectives. I think again what something like *Q* did was to homogenise all that. You had to write in a certain style to be in *Q*, and ever since then that's almost been like the blueprint for all music writing for a so-called adult audience. Whereas the *NME* has gone the other way and is more youth orientated. I don't agree that that was the golden age, I don't think there was any one golden age of music writing but I do think that now the homogeneity of so much of it is very disappointing, and I think there are good writers but they tend to be hidden away. I think it's still possible to do a magazine where you're getting all of those people in one place, it would just be my idea of who those people are. And unfortunately there are a lot of people who are content to follow the *Q* blueprint.

Yes I get the sense that at the end of the 70s early 80s there were lots of 'think pieces', or pieces with a strong political stance, but now it's much more vanilla?

Absolutely, I think there's nothing political about the so-called specialist music press at all. You just don't get think pieces in any of those places. You get lists pieces and you get sensationalist pieces and Pete Docherty's drugs hell on the road type of pieces.

I did an MA in this kind of area before I started this research and I remember looking at some of Lester Bangs material and I got the impression that things were very different back then?

He was an individual writer and when I read him I completely disagree with almost everything he says, but he was an individual all right.

He seems to have been pushed up there as a bit of a hero figure now, but I don't know whether he actually was or not?

For a certain generation I should think, yes I think he was. I think people now, well, everything of that age is like a dinosaur now. I see you've got a thing from *Rocksbackpages* there, I think that whole site is a complete waste of time, I mean I'm on there, Barney Hoskins site.

These are all your articles (showing the list)

Oh my God, all those things are on there? You see I'm kind of embarrassed now because I would never want to go back and look at that now and think that's worth re-reading. They've actually done a book of 'the best of it', and there is a piece in there that I wrote on Neil Young, and I thought well actually that's not bad. But by and large it belongs to its time. I mean it's weekly journalism. I don't think any of that really was meant to last. I'd probably disagree with everything I said at that time. I must have said lots of things were great then and I'd look back now and think 'Christ that was rubbish', you know.

It's good though that it's being held and captured I guess, it's a moment in time.

Well maybe it is. Well if you're a kind of sociological historian possibly.

I must leave you to it as I've run over, I'm sorry about that

That's all right, I've enjoyed talking about it. I haven't thought about these things for a long time. Well I hope it gives you some assistance in whatever comes out of all this. (46m44)

Interview with Clive Davis
Bel and The Dragon, Cookham, Berkshire. 2nd August 2006

Part A

So according to my database you started writing for *The Times* around 1988?

I think it was 1987, it was such a long time ago, but I think it was 1987.

And predominantly jazz?

Jazz, yes, I guess it is. I would say 60% to 70% is jazz, but I also do world music, rhythm and blues, in the old fashioned sense, in the real sense of the word, not the R'n'B you get nowadays, and I like vintage musicals, so I tend to do those as well.

So tell me about the style and approach that you adopted when you started writing in 1987/88. Did you absorb a style of writing that was already out there, in other publications or in *The Times*, or did you deliberately set out to do something different?

A bit of both. I originally came in to deputise for Richard Williams. It might be worth you getting hold of him actually because Richard was very senior at *The Times* in those days; he was an Assistant Editor on the whole paper. I think he was in charge of features at the time. Well Richard was Editor of *Melody Maker*, or certainly used to write for *Melody Maker*, edited *Time Out*. So he goes back a long, long way, he would be in his late fifties I guess now, at *The Guardian* obviously now, doing sport. But Richard would know much more than I would about the technical side of things as they were affected by Wapping, because he was actually there. I hardly ever go in the office, but he'd know all about what was happening, he's got a good overview of things really.

I'm probably unusual, unlike most music journalists I wasn't working as a music journalist before I joined *The Times*, I was a news journalist. I joined the BBC as a News Trainee in 1982. I was one year before Jeremy Bowen. So my interest has always been in news and politics, as well as arts generally. And then after the BBC I joined *The London Daily News* which was a Maxwell newspaper, which was supposed to be Britain's first 24-hour newspaper. It was going to be a competitor to *The Evening Standard*, and of course it was a complete mess because Maxwell didn't know what he wanted. But I've always liked writing about music as a sideline, I was doing music reviews for *The London Daily News* and then it folded very abruptly and I was always desperate to become a freelance journalist and I knew Richard Williams, I'd met him once I think, and he gave me the job of deputising for him. But it soon emerged that he couldn't actually do any jazz reviewing any more, he was so busy on the production side of the paper that he more or less let me take over. So I adopted his style really at the beginning for continuity's sake. But the one thing I've always wanted to do, especially with jazz, is try and draw jazz back into the mainstream of culture instead of treating it as a marginal esoteric subject. In my view I'm writing for people who don't necessarily know a lot about jazz but they're curious and they want to learn more, but they never know where to start and when they look at a lot of jazz journalism, in this country and in America, it's incredibly insular a lot of it. It's preaching to the converted I think and it's quite intimidating to the beginner. So I've always wanted to make it much more readable than usual and bring in analogies that make sense to people, like comparing someone to Alfred Hitchcock or a novelist, and you signpost things for people and then it becomes more comprehensible to them. I think there's a big readership out there potentially, but it's not being reached by jazz journalists in particular because they're talking to themselves too much, that's my opinion. I'll probably upset some saying that. That's how I've always approached it, that's my guideline.

So you were trying to make it accessible?

Yes, and lively. A lot of jazz journalism is very well meaning and there's some incredibly well-informed people doing it, but they are talking to themselves a lot of the time. I just had the experience as an ordinary reader; I would read reviews of albums that sounded wonderful and I'd go and buy them and they were quite second rate and this happened several times. So I always felt we should be more honest about the quality, which is something else, especially on the jazz side, that people aren't willing to do, they're not willing to voice their true opinions about a lot of things I think because they feel jazz is this endangered art form, which it is in a way, it's got pop music pushing it to one side all the time and classical music doesn't really know what to make of jazz and so classical people tend to be slightly patronising about it. It has improved though, it's much better than it used to be.

So a bit of both, so you started off doing something a little bit like Richard Williams...
Yes, that was the house style.

That was the next question, how did you adapt your personal style to suit the house style? (7m)
[A series of comments proceeded here which the interviewee specified should be kept off the record]
Do you know Philip Larkin's book on jazz, *All What Jazz*? Yes, I've read the Introduction. Well the Introduction is fantastic. [Further comments off the record] I mean I think it's a masterpiece, I think Philip Larkin has the right approach to music criticism in terms of jazz, he's very honest, and acknowledges his limitations, realises that you can't like everything, no-one can like everything. [Further comments off the record] It's the classic, apart from writing about a gig where the person had died, which has happened, someone went to cover a Duke Ellington concert and it was cancelled because someone had died but the critic wrote it up anyway, I've never quite managed to do that. Anyway, that's a digression.

Richard was slightly loftier than me, let's put it that way. But he never interfered, I was given a completely free hand. I had an Editor who was an opera specialist who had no interest in anything non-classical, John Higgins, who is dead now, extremely aloof, old-style *Times* Editor. But he just gave me a completely free hand, so that was good; and from then on I was more or less free to find my own voice, which was similar to Richard but slightly less lofty, that's all I'll say, slightly more down to earth. It's hard with the *The Times*. When you write for *The Times* you feel this kind of burden of history weighing down on you, which is ridiculous because when you look at the paper, the paper is extremely populist now as you can see, I mean it had Viagra on the front page today didn't it? It's quite vulgar in many ways. But when you write for *The Times* you are very aware that it's the oldest newspaper and you do feel there are certain words you can't use and you get stuck in certain constructions which is slightly constricting. I don't know if David Sinclair found that, but I'm still aware of it. Even though the paper is a tabloid now. *The Independent* seems to be much more of an intellectual newspaper as far as I can see. (10m52)

Did they ever give you guidelines on house style in terms of things you could or couldn't say about music in general or any words you could or couldn't use?
No, I don't recall anyone saying that. It was very loose relationship.

You were saying about the history involved when writing for *The Times*, but did you feel that there was a canonical style of writing that you had to live up to with respect to the jazz genre? Did you feel that you had to fit into a chronology?

There is this pressure to adhere to what Philip Larkin called a party line in jazz, and it starts in 1900 and it's ever upwards, which I don't think is necessarily true. But you do feel under pressure to feel that whoever comes along in every decade is as interesting or possibly even more interesting than the person who has come before, which is nonsense in fact. But most jazz people would consciously or not stick to that idea. It's hard to escape that, and also because I didn't have a background in music journalism I felt slightly intimidated by more established names, I felt I ought to really conform to their ideas. So it took a few years for me to decide, the only reason to do this is to find music you like and write about it, and if you don't like something you have to say you don't like it otherwise there's no point doing it, it's as simple as that.

I'm trying to think who was covering jazz before you?

Well Richard Williams did and Miles Kington did for a long time. And Miles Kington's advantage is that he's a musician, a double bass player, so that gave him an advantage. I don't recall reading his work much though to be honest. I wasn't a regular *Times* reader for a long time. So not influenced by his writing? No, and I've never met him either.

You were saying about the Editor giving you a fairly free hand, I mean how did you and or the Editor decide which artists you would cover or did they just leave it up to you?

They left it entirely up to me. But that has changed recently, but that's outside your remit anyway. But it was left up to us.

And so you could just phone them up and 'say so and so's playing, I'm going to cover them'?

Yes, in terms of reviews I'd submit a schedule at the beginning of each month with what I planned to do and it was as simple as that really.

And they never complained or changed anything?

No.

Did that change as time went on? Were Editors getting more hands on?

Not in the period you're talking about. Now it's different.

Do you know when that changed? Was it in the 1990s?

No, with me, in *The Times* it changed about two years ago. Yes the whole system has changed. We used to have an Arts Editor and he or she would have a deputy and that would essentially be it, maybe one Chief Sub. Now there's an Arts Editor and she's assigned a specific person to cover the music section. [Further comments off the record]

Still Editors come and go don't they (15m04)

Yes, well she's been there a year now. We've only spoken once in a year, so that shows you what it's like. Actually I should say that I was writing for *The Sunday Times* as well.

When did you start with *The Sunday Times*, because I haven't picked that up in my database?

No, it's outside your period. No I didn't start writing for *The Sunday Times* until 1994, I was living in New York and I started writing for them as well. Yes it was definitely 1994. They are more hands on. They're very conscious of fulfilling their reader's every desire, they're very market driven. More so than *The Times*? Oh yes. But as far as *The Times* was concerned there was hardly any guidance.

So pop and rock was, I guess by that point, fairly well established on the arts page by the time you came along, but did you, when you arrived in 1987, notice a hierarchy between the music genres in terms of which might achieve the most page space or get the best position on the page?

I think the sense was that the classical people belonged at the top of the tree, and then came pop. Really? I would say so, purely because that's where the readership was heading. It wasn't necessarily because the Editor necessarily loved pop music. And then I would say jazz was bottom of the hierarchy I suppose really. I mean I was lucky because I was also able to write about other kinds of music and I was able to write about literature as well. I was always able to find something to write about so I didn't feel too pigeonholed by it. So when you came along in 1988 you felt that pop was higher up the tree? That was my guess, it's such a long time ago.

Did you ever sense that you were jostling for space and position with other music journalists?

No, because the music I was covering... did we have another jazz critic at *The Times*? no we didn't. No, my music was so distinct and my taste was so distinct from the others it was very clear. That's always been a nice thing about it. David Sinclair would occasionally cover a gig like Pat Metheny but he would ask me first if I minded, so it was always very nice. I was very glad not to do Pat Metheny.

Did you feel that the classical and maybe the pop writers received more Editorial support with things like booking travel for trips, or did they have PA's who were helping the classical people more than the pop or jazz people, more in-house support?

No, not in-house. No I'm not aware of any.

Did you feel that jazz was being gradually elbowed out of the way a little bit to make more room for rock? (19m05)

No, not really. In fact that was a good period actually because I would say by the beginning of the 1990s we had more jazz coverage than all the papers with the exception of *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* was always the leader because most jazz people just naturally gravitate to *The Guardian*, it's just a lifestyle thing isn't it. It's odd, *The Telegraph* nowadays hardly ever covers jazz, whereas I would have thought there would be a huge constituency among *Telegraph* readers, because of that older generation, and Philip Larkin used to write for *The Sunday Telegraph*. I mean *The Sunday Telegraph* now has one or two jazz pieces a year. But that's outside your period.

I didn't have a chance to look at *The Telegraph*. I would have loved to.

Well Robert Sandall writes for *The Telegraph* now.

And so the hierarchies sound like they were fairly fixed in that period, there was no change?

And I didn't have any objection with that, I thought it made sense. I'm glad that classical music had priority. I don't think it does any more. But it did then. Perhaps, for the best.

Just a quick question, but did you notice that you were getting more pictures attached to your work as time went on?

No, not really, it was fairly static.

Did you always know in advance if you were going to get a picture or was it a surprise?

Well there'd always be a picture on a feature, well there wouldn't always be, sometimes it would get pushed down to the bottom. So in about 70% of cases there would be a picture but you wouldn't know. From the point of view of a journalist it's incredibly frustrating because you can write a really good piece and you open the paper to see it and it's shoved down the bottom because the picture wasn't any good. You can write a really boring piece, you've rushed it and you know you haven't really got the piece right, and it's top of the page because it has a good picture, which I find maddening, because photographers earn more money than journalists as well. Well in my experience they do. I find it maddening, because anyone can become a photographer, but not everyone can write, he says like an egomaniac. I mean it's true, I love photography but writing is harder. I'm not bitter!

And were you being asked to write longer articles as the period progressed?

No. The standard length would be about 1100, well the longest would be about 1100 words, so if it's a major figure you'd tend to get that much in. Lesser figures would get 700 sometimes 600 words. It was fairly standardised.

Would they let you know your word count?

Yes, they'd tell you more or less what they wanted. (22m43)

Would you have a weekly word count?

No, it was very ad hoc. There was a period, I don't know if David had a contract, but I had a contract at one point with *The Times* and then I had to produce a certain number of pieces a year. And then as far as I know they axed all of the contracts and so we went back to being purely freelance. Which didn't affect my income, I probably earned more in fact as a result. It just created a bit more uncertainty, but when you're freelance you're used to that anyway, Editors are a bit temperamental. (23m20)

So you could put together a monthly schedule of who you'd be going to see and what you'd be writing about?

Yes, in terms of concerts.

And they'd come back and say 'well you have hundred words on that and hundred words on that'?

Yes, well concerts I'd do a month in advance, features it varied. Each month varied actually and I'd normally let them know two weeks in advance before the event to see what they said.

So perhaps with marketing, if the Editor could generate a bit of income by placing an advert, would they ever phone you up and say 'could you do a review of this or a feature on that because we can tie it in with an advert'?

No it never happened. Probably for the reason that basically there's not enough money in jazz and world music, it could well have happened with pop people, although I doubt it. It didn't happen to me.

There's several books and texts that imply that there was a decline in the quality of rock journalism in particular in the 1980s, with people like Charles Shaar Murray talking about the Golden Age of the 1970s.

Is this in national newspapers or just generally?

It tends to be generally but the specialist music press in particular. But did you ever get a sense that there was a decline in the quality of jazz journalism around that period? Or was there a golden age of jazz journalism?

That's a hard one. Well yes and no. I was aware that some elder statesmen were coming to the end of their careers, Charles Fox who was Radio 3's jazz man but also a print journalist, he was coming to the end of his career, I think he died in the early 1990s. So I had a sense that that was changing. And they had a great fund of personal insights because they'd spent a lot of time with musicians. Charles Fox and Max Harrison at *Melody Maker*, Max Harrison he was a friend of Billie Holiday, so that gives you an insight into someone's performances which you don't get from just listening to a record. But in terms of national newspapers I don't think there was a golden age actually. I think the coverage of jazz now is probably better than it was, Richard Cook might disagree, I don't know, there's more coverage

now. It's livelier, there's just a lot more, it used to be very hard to squeeze in pieces on jazz so I don't think it applies, I think rock music had its own cycle and I'm not sure that jazz had the same cycle. So you were aware that there was an end of an era. Yes when a lot of personal knowledge went. But on the other hand I'm not sure those people were particularly great journalists or great writers, so it's hard to say. So experts on jazz but not such great writers? That's always been the problem with jazz, people are experts but can't communicate the expertise. (27m14)

Did you feel that the quality of the material you wrote depended on the quality of the performers you covered? So if you had a really high quality act would you say you were able to produce a higher quality piece of writing?

It was the opposite really. I think most critics would say the same, if you have a bad performance it's easier to write about usually because you can allow your sarcasm and anger.

I'm just thinking of this rock decline, some people might say it's because the quality of the music has declined?

I think that's true. I think rock music died in about 1978 basically, and that's why they have nothing to write about. They go through the motions of filling all this space they've got, talking about acts that are incredibly trivial compared with what happened in the 1960s. I came of age in the 1970s and even then I was aware that pop music wasn't as interesting as it was in the 1960s, even though the 1960s wasn't my period, and you got to the 1980s and it's obvious. But now it's just a joke isn't it, it's hilarious. So rock music journalists now have to write about, well it's very post-modern now, they're talking about the gestures and everyone's going through the act of pretending it's interesting and they must know it's not. I don't want to upset them, but.

Do you think there's any parallel there with jazz?

There is in a way because, I think the most creative period in jazz was probably up to about 1965, I don't think there's any argument about that. Well there is, I mean some people would say free jazz liberated the musicians, I don't think it did. I think jazz flourished between about 1925 and 1965, that was the peak period. But on the other hand, for jazz journalists in this country, things probably became more interesting in terms of, I mean you would have seen very few American jazz acts coming to this country until the 1950s or 1960s because of the Musicians Union rules, it was very hard for people. I was reviewing a Humphrey Lyttelton album a few weeks ago from the 1960s and on the original sleeve note it says 'yes we had this beautiful recording date in Switzerland with Buck Clayton', and in fact it wasn't done in Switzerland at all it was done in Willesdon. But they had to pretend, because of the Musicians Union rules, that they were in Switzerland. I'm going of the point. But for the jazz journalists now the golden age has finished, I think, but in terms of access to the music it's actually much better now. You have many more re-issues. I suspect there are more venues, travel is easier so in fact there's a lot to write about even if it's not necessarily of the same quality.

In terms of music advertising, did you notice any changes in music advertising – perhaps an increase in the number of music adverts? (31m16)

Well there was a spurt of jazz-related advertising around the time I started at *The Times*, as that was supposed to be the first jazz boom since the 1960s I suppose. So about 1987? Jazz became very fashionable, you had that film *Absolute Beginners*, which was a flop in fact, but it created this buzz, and Courtney Pine had come along. You'd see jazz in adverts. Yes, there was a slight increase and then it tailed off again. We seem to be going through another one at the moment which is quite good. So a short-lived boom in jazz advertising? Yes, a mini boom. And did that affect you and your writing in any way? No.

Were you ever getting your work pushed out of the way at the last minute to make space for an advert or anything like that?

Very occasionally yes, and then you could never be sure whether it was because they didn't like your piece. They very rarely spiked anything I wrote, I was very lucky. In fact I don't think they ever spiked anything as far as I know so I was quite lucky. I've been hearing about kill fees. Yes *The Sunday Times* is more prone to do that because it's a Sunday so they've got less space compared with the dailies, which has got six days a week.

With *The Times* being a daily publication, with reviews etc did you find that you were on really short timescales; would you get something through the post and have to have the review in by the next day?

No. Concert reviews, the deadline was about, it changed several times, I think the concert deadline, the review deadline was 9 o'clock in the morning the next day. It's now 11 o'clock. Sometimes you

do overnights though. I did do a couple of overnights, that's hard work, you know filing at 10.30. I still do that sometimes. I do theatre occasionally, you sit in the play and you're hardly listening to the dialogue in the second half because you're too busy writing a piece, it's ridiculous. That was with live reviews. Albums were much more easy. They tended to appear usually on Saturdays, it did change, and the deadline would be Wednesday, and you'd always have a few days, quite comfortable. So you weren't being forced to rush things? No, no.

So the Wapping Dispute then. Obviously you started after all that had kicked off? Yes, just after. But did it affect your writing or career in any way that you're aware of?

Not directly. I think it made freelancers lives easier. Papers become much more flexible, but that's about as far as I would take it really. Richard Williams would be a good person to talk to about that because he had very little sympathy for the print workers. I remember talking to him. They were just awful, the print workers, because they exploited their position incredibly. They got a lot of sympathy from people on the left especially, but they were just awful. They were just lazy and pig headed. Yes, didn't The Times go out of production? Yes it did, it closed down because they just couldn't produce the newspaper, it was impossible.

So if the amount of page space increased or size of publication doubled that was probably already underway when you came on board, but did you notice it suddenly expand in the time that you were there?

Not suddenly. Gradually, it's been expanding all the time. The Saturday edition would take on extra supplements.

And any change in the technology that you used to submit your work?

No.

What about the political climate under Margaret Thatcher, did that affect your writing or career in any way that you can think of?

No, not in that period. Later it has affected it a lot, the general political climate. But that's off the subject. But most people who work in arts journalism are very left wing and I'm not. I used to be, but I'm not. And they have all sorts of assumptions about culture and politics which are hilarious because they've never examined these assumptions, and most are very anti-American and again I'm not, I'm the opposite. So I've had a lot of clashes with people because they adhere to a line which they never question, it's the done thing, it's extraordinary. It's off the subject, but the Michael Moore, Stupid White Men, phenomenon is interesting because Michael Moore is a charlatan and a liar and a faker and yet because he's on the left he's always given a pass and he's allowed to proceed unhindered. It's extraordinary, I mean that would make a good book one day, although I know someone has written a book about him. And in music there's a kind of assumption that, for instance, hip hop, is something that is never challenged. Everyone assumes that hip hop is somehow as vital as Motown was in the 1960s and as creative, and it's a joke as far as I can see. [Further comments off the record]

You said you had a free hand in choosing the artists that you covered, did you find that your personal political stance would affect who you chose to cover and would that then clash with the Editor's?

Well no, the Editor never had any preferences. Let me think, 1981 – 1991. I don't think it became a major issue at that point, no. Actually I used to freelance for *The Guardian* and it wasn't a problem there either. That was before I joined *The Times*. It was later that I became more aware of the differences in opinion.

Were there any changes in the music media or media generally that affected your work, things like MTV, video recorders, stereo, CDs, did any of those have a particular impact on your writing or your choice of coverage?

No, I don't think they did, partly because I was always writing about other subjects beside music, so I wasn't as deeply embedded in the music business as other people were, maybe that's why.

Did you find that as music started to get re-released on CD, in a new format, did that generate lots of new work for you?

Not so much work, but I was very conscious of the fact that most of the re-issued music was more interesting than the new music, which is inevitable really isn't it, it's classic music being re-issued. That's a problem that jazz has at the moment, not necessarily a problem, I mean it can be a problem, if you have only five hundred words and you've got to write about two albums and you've got four classic re-issues and four moderately boring new discs you're inevitably tempted to go for the reissues

which is slightly dangerous, but I don't think there's any way around that actually. I think jazz musicians should think about how they issue their music, I think that's the trouble. I think the CD is a bit of a curse actually, it's expensive and hardly anyone has come up with the solution to how to fill that space, as opposed to 40 minutes on an LP.

Anything else in the wider media?

No I don't think so.

The Independent, launched in 1986, did that have any repercussions for you or what you were writing about?

I also wrote for *The Independent*, I'd forgotten that. When did you write for them? Before *The Times*, just before *The Times*. I was *The Independent's* jazz critic for a while. I don't think I've picked up on that in my database. Well it wasn't for very long and it wasn't a happy experience. I didn't like working for them. It was Thom Sutcliffe, not the one you've been dealing with, the other one, he calls himself Thomas Sutcliffe doesn't he. I probably didn't spend more than four months there I suspect, it's such a long time ago. They had a very old fashioned attitude towards jazz, I mean *The Times* seemed like hippies compared with *The Independent*. *The Independent* was very conscious of the hierarchy and classical music was always much more important than jazz.

That really surprises me. I thought with them being new that they may be different?

Yes, well it was a good newspaper *The Independent*, and I think it did raise the standards, but some of the staff were extremely pompous about their mission, which I suppose they had to be. It was not a pleasure writing for them, because they were much more hands-on, even though they didn't know very much, and at a really superficial level they would ask for too many words, which sounds silly but they would. They would ask for 600 words on a concert that you knew deserved 300, so inevitably you were just padding. That doesn't happen so much now but in the early days I was very conscious of that, it was no great fun working for them. We were given less space but we had to write more if you see what I mean. So I was very glad to leave. In terms of jazz they were very, very conservative. I was doing world music as well, I wasn't doing world music for *The Independent*. So I don't think *The Independent* had any influence, it's hard to remember actually, but I don't recall it having, because they didn't really think of jazz as being important. Maybe other people will tell you otherwise, but that wasn't my experience, no. At the moment they have Sholto Byrnes covering jazz, and Sholto Byrnes was their gossip columnist. I don't recall they've ever had anyone with a big reputation on jazz writing for them, I could be wrong.

You said there was more of a sense of hierarchy at The Independent, was it still classical at the top and then pop and then jazz at the bottom?

Yes. And a lot of these things come down to the personal taste of one particular person and in this case Thomas Sutcliffe was clearly not interested. Fiona Maddocks was his Deputy. Fiona Maddocks I think was the Music Editor so I was dealing with her, and it was not exactly a meeting of minds shall we say. They were very aloof and quite glacial to deal with. And I just wasn't doing enough for them, it was pointless, and it wasn't a pleasure writing for them at all so I thought why was I doing this? And then *The Times* came along and gave me a way out really. (46m)

So that was freelance at The Independent?

Yes and I was freelance at *The Times* as well.

And so you didn't find that The Times were saying 'The Independent has started doing XY or Z so we need you to do X, Y or Z'?

No, they were more aware of what *The Guardian* was doing. Although *The Independent* has never had really good arts coverage, which is really odd. Even now it's stuck at the back of the supplement, the tabloid.

I noticed they seemed to be quite keen on rock and pop initially?

Yes, and their books coverage is really good. They never had really good arts coverage, and I find it odd because it's such a central part of a newspaper.

So no repercussions from The Independent at The Times?

No. (46m55)

Were there any other publications that emerged during that period which might have affected your writing, for example *Q* magazine? No, it didn't. *The Modern Review*? No, Toby Young's thing? No. I mean those magazines wouldn't give much space to jazz or world music or any of the things I'm interested in, so no. I think *Q* was very much into looking over the back catalogue at what had gone before and setting things in their place. No it didn't affect me, I'm sure it affected the pop people but it didn't affect me, no.

So between 1988 – 91, thinking about your relationship with the readers, the Editors and the music business whose side were you on? Did you feel closer to the readers?

Closer to the readers, absolutely, always closer to the readers, otherwise there's no point doing it. Because a newspaper is not a specialist magazine it's there for a general reader to give them a way of hacking a path through this undergrowth which is very dense and dark and intimidating.

So if you were to put those groups of people into a priority order list, would it be readers first? Yes. And then you've got your Editor to please? Obviously you've got to please the Editor, the Arts Editor. And then there's the PR departments and the artists themselves. For me, the PR departments were at the bottom.

And so with artists themselves, did you ever think 'I'll do a good review of this group because I like them as people and I get on really well with them'?

No, it's always the work. You'd often find that people were disappointing when you met them in interviews, because jazz musicians are not used to talking, they talk through their music, they don't talk through words, and I've always found it slightly difficult getting really interesting sentences out of them,. It's not that they're not interesting, it's just that it's not how they communicate, and I think they find it frustrating because they're speaking in a second language.

So they're not talkers? No.

So you said you had a fairly free hand in who you spoke to and interviewed, so if you thought an artist was absolutely hopeless, or no good, would you just chose to avoid them?

Yes. Well there are certain people who you can't avoid, I'm trying to think who would fall into that period. I suppose the obvious example for me is Keith Jarrett. Keith Jarrett's a pianist and technically he's the most accomplished pianist in jazz, and he's also a very good classical pianist, so music students love Keith Jarrett because he fulfils all their dreams he can play anything. His best known album is called *The Köln Concert*, it's a solo improvisation that goes on for about fifty minutes. It's on ECM, a German label. That's probably the biggest selling jazz album. I cannot abide Keith Jarrett, to me he's incredibly self-indulgent, unbelievably, it's the pinnacle of self-indulgence as far as I'm concerned. But you can't avoid him, he'll sell out the Festival Hall easily. So with an artist like that it's hard, and you just have to be honest. It is embarrassing, you think 'what are these people in the audience hearing that I'm not?' It's an odd experience.

I suppose you have to write a bad review once in a while though? Do you think 'I haven't done a bad one now for a few months so one's about due'? (53m04)

No. Maybe you want to go into that later on. But one thing I feel is important is that if you go to concert that you find boring then you have to say it's boring and in jazz generally people would rather not do that. I'll make a few enemies saying that, but it's true. When the theatre critics go to a play, they feel quite open about saying 'that was a dreadful play', jazz people just do not like doing that. They hate it because they feel it's an incredibly, a much more subjective business, because in a play, say it's Shakespeare, you have the text and you know exactly what you're comparing the text to, but in jazz it's much more fluid and you don't know if that man really meant to play that flat note, so people are very wary about passing judgement As if you're letting the side down? Yes, you're letting the side down because it's a minority pursuit. But I think you're actually making conditions worse by being endlessly positive because if you're positive about everything then how on earth is the reader supposed to know what's good and what's bad, it's as simple as that. I think that's the problem with jazz at the moment, has been for a long time. (54m40)

Do you think I've missed anything on that side of things, the wider social conditions or the style of writing?

No, maybe it's different for other people, but I wasn't conscious of being effected by outside influences that much.

So you started at *The Times* in 1987. Maybe it was 1988, that's the earliest piece you found is it? Maybe stick to 1988, you would know better in that case. I left *The London Daily News* middle of 1987, then I was at *The Independent* for a short time, so yes that makes sense. So you started at *The Times* as a freelance initially? Yes, still am a freelance. But there was a short period when you had a contract? I had a contract briefly, that's outside your period really, that was after 1991. I still had a contract when I was in New York as far as I recall. I wanted to live there so I went over for about seven or eight months, and I was writing for *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

So how did you actually get the job with *The Times*?

It was through Richard Williams needing someone to deputise for him. I was actually supposed to be doing just the listings and an occasional concert, that was the original plan, but after about two or four weeks he was promoted I think to a much more demanding role.

So how did he know about you, did you respond to a job advert?

I had met him at a concert when I was at *The London Daily News* and I was very aware of his work because when I was a sixth former I was reading Richard Williams, I really admired his work. And I was at a concert with the *London Daily News* and I saw a man who I took to be Richard Williams, I don't know why I thought it was him, I hadn't seen a picture, and I struck up a conversation and it was him. So we just met the once. And what happened after that did he contact me or did I contact him? I can't remember, I honestly can't remember what happened, maybe I dropped him a line. But you obviously got on well and struck a chord with each other? Yes, yes.

So a chance meeting. So he didn't then interview you or say 'bring us along a portfolio of your writing'?

No, we had lunch. He told me what he wanted over lunch.

So initially it was just listings and the odd concert review so did they say 'just do the odd one or two and we'll see if it works and take it from there', or were you just kind of on-board from the off?

I was just on board. Yes, it sounds weird now looking back.

I used to work as Human Resources Manager and I'm really intrigued by how informal the recruitment process was with music journalists.

I mean that's a problem with journalism generally. The informality is very good, I shouldn't complain, because I got through that way. But that's why journalism is so cliquey because there's no set procedure for entrance into the industry. And it's still the same now? Yes, as far as I know and it's 'who you know'. It's dreadful. I'm interested in blogging and the thing I like about blogging is that it's open to anyone and you have this alternative network of voices. Of course cliques develop but it's much more fluid than journalism. I'm always shocked when I look at national newspapers and scan the bylines, how many sons and daughters of journalists are employed in the business, it's extraordinary, and it's one of the subjects that people don't like discussing for obvious reasons.

I've noticed that, because once I built my database sadly my first job was to find out which of the writers were still alive and of those who were establish whether any contact details existed for them, a web page, a home address or some society that they belong to, and several people had a biography on the internet and I couldn't help noticing how many people studied at Oxford.

Yes, I went to Oxford. I went to St Catherine's at Oxford. I hated Oxford you see, I've never had anything to do with it since. I hated the social networking side. But I'm always amazed how big a role that plays, it's incredible. It does seem to be a common thread that I keep spotting, something is happening there with Oxford I'm sure. It is, it's true. I've never made any use of it. I don't see any of my old friends at all.

I wonder if maybe all the newspaper Editors are all from Oxbridge?

Yes it is, so they assume that there's a particular type of intelligence that goes with being from Oxbridge which I don't think is true at all. But they like to pigeonhole people. So you've got the kind of Oxford network and then the informality, it creates a very, well I'll give you an example; Robert Sandall, I've known him for as long as I've been at *The Times*, Robert got his first job in journalism through me. I was a very good friend of a woman who knew him and set up a meeting between me and him, and we had a drink and he was looking for work, he wasn't working in journalism at all, and I was on *The London Daily News* at that point and I put him in touch with my Editor and that's how he began. I don't see him very often now, but that's how he began. He knows David Sinclair very well, they're old friends. That's the one thing I hate about journalism, it's so unbelievably clique, it's really

unhealthy because it's supposed to be reflecting society, well how can it when you have the same bunch of people with a very narrow background all talking to each other which is what it is. (1h02m30)

I'm discovering this as I go along, I'm quite new to these things.

Well why wouldn't you be, because they never discuss it. I've tried writing articles about it, you mention it to Editors and it always makes you sound as if you're feeling bitter, I'm not bitter about it, it's just that it's a fact. American journalism is based on more professional lines, you have to qualify generally at journalism school, you don't have to but generally speaking people do, and it's more of a craft, and people here look down on American journalism well it's actually a better standard than we have here because it's more thorough, it can be more boring sometimes but it's more thorough. That's why their magazines are better than ours, because people actually work at it, whereas here it's Oxford charm that gets you by.

You mentioned qualifications, so they never actually asked about yours? I mean I think journalism courses are much more prolific now than they were in the 1980s, but there was no specific requirement for particular qualifications? Did you need to be a graduate – in any subject?

No, nothing. I've never used mine, I've never even collected my degree actually. I was in debt at the time I left so I had to pay off my debts.

So no interview? No. No portfolio of work? No. No qualifications necessary? No.

Would you say that was the same for all the genres – the way that people were recruited?

I'm sure with classical there must be more emphasis on graduate qualifications, I'd have thought. I'm not aware of specifics. Actually, I suspect in classical music it probably isn't much stricter than pop journalism actually. It's a question of being able to write and you can write without having a degree in a subject. So it's about being able to write and not necessarily having a music background? Yes. I noticed that people seem more likely to hold an English or literature degree than a music degree. Yes.

In terms of level of pay, was that based on number of words or were you just given a flat rate for a review, a listing or a feature?

Yes, it was a different rate for each piece. It's always incredibly vague in many ways, it still is now. I'll write a piece and not know what I'm going to be paid for it. I mean maybe other people are more assertive about it, but as long as I do things regularly I don't pay too much attention to the detail. Do you know if that's the same for other genres?

No, I honestly don't know. So it's not openly publicised, you don't get a sheet through the post saying 'all music journalists will get X rate for X type of piece'. No because people aren't in unions. I don't think I've ever been a member of the NUJ, maybe briefly. So very much individualistic? Yes.

Did that method of payment change during the period?

No. The contract came later, so it didn't change.

So which type of article paid best?

A feature always paid best, because that's obviously longer.

And would maybe listings get a much lower rate of pay?

I think for a 1000 word article they probably would've paid £200, it's such a long time ago I've forgotten, and listings you would make maybe half of that. The listings section was quite large during those days.

Yes I noticed that listings seem to have expanded during that period.

Well the listings idea took off partly because of *The London Daily News*, because the woman who was in charge of the listings section at *The London Daily News* set up her own company, which became incredibly successful. I think it's the basis of PA Listings now actually. Are listings outsourced to them now? PA Listings provide a lot of the copy. At *The Times* I go through what they've sent and I pick out highlights and correct them, because they make a lot of mistakes, but it is essentially outsourced, yes.

Somebody else suggested that listings came about because of Q, because that was quite lists based.

Ah, I wouldn't know.

So if you were freelance I'm guessing there were no long terms rewards like pensions or job security?
No.

Did they ever invest in any kind of learning or development or professional development for you? No. So you had to do all of that yourself? Yes. Was there anything around in the 1980s to help with that such as seminars, conferences, training courses? No, I wasn't aware of anything.

So in terms of keeping yourself up to speed, or developing your writing, what was available to you and what did you use? Was it just a case of reading other people's work?

It was really, because I was covering other areas as well as music. If I was covering one subject, music, all the time I'd have got very bored actually. (1h13m00)

How, if at all, did you ever receive any feedback on the work that you submitted to *The Times*?

From Editors? Yes. Informal chats on the phone. That was before the days of email of course. Yes it was occasional comments on the phone. I wasn't the kind of person to spend lots of time chatting on the phone, and I'd hardly ever go into the office so our contact was minimal. I like it like that to be honest. It's nice having an Editor who's not telling you what to do.

Did they ever call you into the office, I guess being freelance you wouldn't have an annual appraisal, but did they ever once a year say 'just pop in'?

I'd have lunch with my Editor about once a year. It wasn't a set thing, but we'd normally meet about once.

So you had a fairly free hand in choosing the music that you could cover, but did they ever ask for your opinion or your views if they were thinking of changing the arts pages or introducing a new section. Would they ever ask your opinion?

No, I don't think they did. I can't think of an example of that happening.

In the 1980s various new supplements came along and the paper expanded, and I always envisaged all of the arts critics being called in, and someone saying 'we're thinking of changing the format, what do you think, any ideas?', I mean journalists are fairly creative people.

I always had this vision of journalism. The kind of journalism I admired was in the 1960s, New York journalism, incredibly creative, what's called the new journalism, with people like Tom Wolfe. But in those days journalists and Editors would have these brainstorming sessions, but I've never experienced anything like that, I've never heard of it happening. Editors nowadays, or at least since I've been doing it, have always been so overworked they can really only look beyond the next two days. They're just trying to stay on top of this beast that is lumbering along, and it's not really got any better, it's weird it just seems the same. My impression is that they tend to ask marketing people that, which is sad, really sad.

Do you ever have much contact with the marketing people directly?

No, no.

What was the most common source of conflict within that professional environment at that time and how were any conflicts typically resolved?

I can't really say there were conflicts. I was just aware, in jazz anyway, there were just differences of opinion about how jazz should be covered, but those disputes were between me and people who worked on other newspapers and other magazines who had more purist ideas. It didn't involve people at *The Times*. I don't know how much you spoke to Richard Cook but Richard has a particular vision of how people should write about jazz, and it's a very different, he feels that we should be paying much more attention to avant-garde experimental jazz, and my feeling is that avant-garde music has had forty years to establish itself and it hasn't, and that probably tells you something about it, to put it in a nutshell. I tend to think, and probably like Dave Gelly as well, that there's a huge swathe of people who are desperate to hear music that's not pop music that stretches them slightly but that's melodic and reasonably accessible. I'm not saying that it has to be dumbed-down, but it has to be friendly in a way. The other school takes a view that jazz is no good unless it challenges people all the time. Well I think if you're going to do that you'll end up with a very minority art form, which is what we've got. I guess you must bump into each other at concerts all the time? Not often, no. Not living in London makes a difference. I'll go to a concert, I'll see a couple of critics but I don't usually have long conversations with them. I mean sometimes we'd all go on press trips together but that doesn't happen that often anyway.

Is that something that happened a lot in the 1980s, press trips? I wonder if there were more of them then than there are now?

I think there were more of them then. I think because the major record companies were dipping a toe into jazz at that point and they had more money to spend. I think that's the case. It's hard to say because I don't do as many interviews as I used to. Trips are offered but I don't take them up very often. Not as often as I used to.

I guess if you're offered a trip, are you obliged to write a favourable review?

You are, so you shouldn't go on the trip if the artist doesn't interest you really. I mean some papers, *The Sunday Times*, doesn't allow journalists to accept trips. Has it always been like that? Having said that, they have changed the rule recently. I don't know when that came into force but it's always been enforced as long as I've been writing for them and that's a long time, twelve years. It makes life awkward. [Further comments off the record]. But the last time I was offered a trip there wasn't a problem, much to my surprise. In fact I didn't go on the trip on the end, but it was fine.

So if you do need to go and see somebody would *The Times*, back in 1987/88-91, would they refund all of your expenses?

No, no. So what you would do is you would arrange to do the interview for, *The Times* was fine, but it was *The Sunday Times* and I wasn't working for them anyway, but in my experience you'd arrange to do the trip and you'd also contact a small music magazine and say 'I've got this chance of an interview with X, would you like a piece?', and if they say 'yes' then you go on the trip and supply the small magazine with a small piece but the main piece is for the Sunday paper and that somehow satisfies their conscience, don't mention this, it seems rather ludicrous really. But no, bigger press trips, they haven't come up. There was more money I think in the late-1980s, major record companies thought they'd make a lot of money out of jazz because it seemed fashionable. Was it the same in world music? World music seemed quieter.

Yes world music seemed to come onto the scene and increase during the 1980s, it became a new category as such. How would Editors decide who would cover new genres such as world music - did they phone around all of their freelancers? Although I guess if you were choosing artists to cover yourself it might have been the other way around?

Yes, I would just suggest things. At *The Times*, the pop critics stick to their patch, classical people stick to their patch and there's this huge amorphous area which I tend to cover. They have John Bungey as well now who does more jazz than me at *The Times* really, or does he? No he doesn't, he does a bit less.

There must be a grey area in between pop and jazz?

Yes there is, I like blues a lot, musicals as I say, when I say musicals the big west end musicals tend to be the theatre people's property or territory but I like doing fringe shows and revivals and anything that's slightly off the beaten track. It's all very informal, we've never sat down and said 'I'm going to do this'. It's just a habit that's developed. As I said it's different now though because we have this new Editor and they're now much more Editor driven, the content, not that I have much contact with my new Editor but, and I know David Sinclair's had this experience, if I have a good idea I send them an email and I'm probably not going to hear back from them, they just don't reply, so that means 'no'. If they want something they contact you. Which is not a very satisfactory way of working.

Do you know when that shifted, when that happened?

Well at *The Times*, about a year ago. I don't know about *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* seems to run along the same lines I think. You'd have to ask Robin Denselow, he would know.

If there's any doubt in your mind and you think 'this might be David Sinclair's patch' you would speak to each other?

Yes, it's normally fairly clear which is which though.

That's the end of my questions, but is there anything else that you can think of regarding jazz journalism in *The Times* between 1988-91?

No.

So I'm writing a thesis on changes on music journalism in the broadsheet press 1981-91, have I missed anything at all for *The Times* from that period?

The other thing I've noticed, and I think it falls within that period, is that there was this trend towards multi-section newspapers. And that had a slightly odd effect. It's been good for journalists in some ways because there's more space to fill obviously and when you're freelance you have three phone calls coming in instead of one. I think that applies to that period 1981-91, yes. The one problem is that, especially from a reader's point of view, they'll see an advert for an album and at the bottom of the advert it says 'First class – a masterpiece – *The Times*'. That's happened to me, I've seen things about jazz albums, and 'Brilliant – *The Times*', and I think 'I didn't write about that album, I didn't say that', and I can't figure it out, it wasn't me who said it. And there's so many supplements now that it's much easier for publicists to get a good mention from somewhere on a national newspaper and I think it has devalued the currency because you'll find that this person who said 'it's a masterpiece' in *The Times* was in the Saturday listings section in a tiny box in one corner and it's not the main critic it's someone else. I can see why publicists do it, it makes sense from their point of view but from a readers point of view it makes things even more confusing and that began to develop in that period I would say, and that's a problem across the board now. The book reviews are very similar now.

The other thing I noticed was that most of the music critics seemed to me male, I don't know if that had an impact on what was chosen? Were all your Editors male as well?

Yes except this troublesome one I've got now. No connection! The Reviews Editor is female as well and she's great, she's been in the job, I lose track, I would guess at least six years if not longer. She's Debra Craine, the dance critic at *The Times*, so I probably shouldn't name her. At *The Independent* Fiona Maddocks was commissioning pieces from me in 1987, but I can't think of any female jazz critics, there must be some. No there aren't, I can't think of anyone. Val Wilmer the photographer, but I can't think of any writers.

Arts Editors, did they tend to come from classical backgrounds, or would a jazz or a pop person make it to become the Arts Editor? Did they all tend to come up from the classical genre?

In two cases they did, in my experience of *The Times*. John Higgins was the opera critic, Richard Morrison was the Editor for a long long time, he's now a columnist and he's a classical critic. I can't speak for other papers, I wouldn't have thought on other papers that would be the case. And the Arts Editor now is female now at *The Times* in fact, a female Arts Editor and a female Music Editor. Her predecessor was a female as well come to think of it. [Further comments off the record]

So Editors were mostly male and none that you can think of coming up from pop or jazz, it was mostly from the classical stream?

People didn't have to have a lot of arts experience, I mean it's more a question of production expertise sometimes. When I freelanced for *The Guardian*, between 1984 to 1986 I think, my Arts Editor there, Roger Alton, I'm sure he didn't have an arts background. He's now the Editor of *The Observer*. Of course it helps to have expertise but it's not essential.

If you freelanced for *The Guardian* from 1984-1986 did Wapping have any effect on that?

No. I was still working, my full time job then was at the BBC in the newsroom and I had a very flexible shift pattern system at the BBC and it gave me enough time to work shifts at *The Guardian*. I was doing news shifts and then I'd do arts features as well.

Would you say the genre hierarchies were the same at *The Guardian* between 1984-86? Because they seemed to have more rock and pop coverage for longer.

Even then I would say they treated classical and pop as equals. That was my impression, in terms of space.

I didn't notice an increase in rock and pop coverage at *The Guardian*, it always seemed consistently high, compared to *The Times* where I did see an increase.

They had very good classical critics but I remember the pop people were given at least as much prominence, as far as I can recall.

... (Part B) ...

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Interview with Robin Denselow
At his home in North London. 14th September 2006

Part A

(0h20)

So as one of the first rock and pop writers for the broadsheets, in particular *The Guardian*, I'm interested in where you got your style of writing from, and did that change over time?

I've absolutely no idea, I've always just written.

So it was just personal?

Yes, it's not based on anybody at all. I think for *The Guardian* what you try to do, because it's not a specialist journal, not being a music paper. It's three things I suppose; first of all information about the person themselves, who you are writing about, if they're unknown, and lots of the people I write about (are), I like to try and write about people who are fairly unknown if they're worth writing about, so you want to get in the very small space that you've got, which is anywhere between 300 to 500 words maybe for a review, a certain amount about who the person is, why they're worth writing about, so they've got to be interesting to someone who knows nothing about the music, as to why they're there in a paper like *The Guardian*; then obviously a certain amount about the event and if it's a particularly colourful event, Bob Marley in Jamaica is obviously wonderful to write about or the Sex Pistols in Amsterdam or things like that, so if it's on location then obviously you want to bring as much colour into it as possible; and then thirdly a value judgement of some sort as to whether it worked within the context of what they're doing and what the record's like and so forth. So it's an exercise in very instant combined judgement and a degree of explaining who the bods are really in the first place. So it is quite an interesting intellectual exercise. The problem with *The Guardian* for many, many years, I say problem but it was interesting, is in the 1980s particularly emails didn't exist, internet didn't exist and they wanted concerts the next day, which they don't so much now, it's got much slower. So my main memory of the 1980s is going to concerts, hoping the thing is going to end on time because often it was far, far, far less controlled than it is now, they were much more chaotic and anarchic events, and then knowing you had to get a piece in by quarter to eleven, which is flippin early, running out of a hall, usually at about quarter past ten having ascertained where the nearest phone boxes are or chatted up the manager of the hall to use his office to phone things through, writing like mad and then, and of course you didn't have word counts on emails or things like that so you had to work out with particular types of note book how many pages came to exactly what they wanted because the words had to be right as well. Often rushing into a phone box kicking some poor hapless girl who is on the phone to her boyfriend off the phone saying 'this is urgent, this is urgent, this is urgent' once it got to nearing deadline and then collapsing into a pub afterwards for a drink just before closing time, which is a very good intellectual exercise. Though the problem was often you would miss the last chunk of the concert with some people because if it were things that were supposed to start at 9pm and ended at 11pm or they came on at 10.15pm, there was a Clapton one once they did about two songs but they had the space so I had to rush off and do it, so one had a few problems like that. But it was all a lot more freewheeling than it is now. Now it's much, much more controlled and you have overnight to write it in and everyone knows what you are writing about and you have the internet and laptops and wi-fi and the rest of it and it's probably technically a lot easier. So one had the whole physical constraints of actually physically doing it and getting it across which were actually, at the time, as important as what you were actually writing, though one was trying to get all these other things in one's head at the same time. So it was interesting.

So stylistically, did you look to say the specialist rock and pop press for any kind of hints?

No, no.

Or did you deliberately try to do something different?

No, I just did it. I've always done that. (5m17)

Did you feel that there was a canonical style of writing that you had to follow on from, any big names that you felt you were following in the footsteps of with regards to how you approached rock and pop?

No. I've always been deliberately sort of, I suppose quite anti-flowery writing. I mean there were some grand writers at *Rolling Stone*, people who write for *NME* all that sort of legendary, you know,

there were some great writers around who I admired enormously. But rather than imitate them I thought it was always best to try and invent one's style of one's own which has always been fairly simple in the sense that what I mostly do, or my day job, has been working in current affairs and television where again the aim is to explain a complicated situation whether you are in sort of Angola in the 1970s or Liberia or Lebanon more recently to try and explain things very succinctly and sort of boil it down to the key points. In television, because you are writing to picture, you are very limited in the amount of words you can use because you can only write to what the pictures are, you've got to try and boil it right down and I suspect that the writing style is kind of affected to a certain extent by that, by trying to boil things down. Which is why writing reviews in 300 to 500 words in quite a small amount of time has always quite suited me, though it's very nice as well to do an interview, I mean to sit down and to, I've got to do 1500 words on somebody this afternoon which will be nice and sort of be a bit more expansive, but in terms of concert reviews which is what I did mostly, and then features in between, that was very much sort of boiling it down.

So you weren't thinking back to people that you'd read?

No. Because I started doing it as a student simply because no-one was doing it for the broadsheets.

Rock and pop writing?

Yes, well with folk music because they wouldn't take pop music to start with. I reviewed The Doors at the Roundhouse down the road here and *The Guardian* said they'd take them if they were a folk band, I said 'they are a folk band of sorts' they said 'OK fine you can have 200 words'. Later of course when people made films about The Doors they got 2000 words. When I started doing it nobody much was doing it and it just seemed to me that coming to London seeing all this stuff going on, I was actually at Oxford, so wandering down to London at the weekend and seeing all this stuff going on I thought, reading the papers, it wasn't there. So I started doing it and they started printing it.

So you approached them?

Yes, I rang them up. They never gave me a contract, I never had a contract with them, and I've just been doing it on the same basis ever since. Which is fine. (8m33)

Did you see your role as being essentially the same as the jazz or the classical music writers on the paper or did you think you were communicating something different?

Slightly different in that the classical writers are writing to an audience where everyone knows that Mozart is dead good, Beethoven is dead good, and then (it's) 'is this a good performance of it?' Likewise with jazz there was a tradition of writing and a tradition of understanding the music that in Britain goes back to the 1930s and 1940s. But with pop music it was very, very new. When I started in the 1960s it was very hard to get any pop music in at all, this was the late, late 1960s as a student, so I started doing folk music which I was a big fan of anyway and which was very much part of the cutting edge at the time, the sort of Sandy Denny's and Fairport Conventions and Incredible String Band and all those people and they were all part of the same world. So if you had the Fairport Convention again playing down the road at the Roundhouse you'd have Pink Floyd and all those sort of people playing on the same sort of bill because that's what the 1960s was like. So there was no clash writing about folk music and writing about pop music, and all the different styles sort of merged into each other in the sense that audiences were very, very eclectic in their taste and could take all sorts of different things which now again is split down into lots of different things. I mean the same with writers, writers are much more specialised in particular areas. But I started with folk music then went into pop music and in the 1980s I was still doing pop music and it was right across the board. I can't remember what I was doing but, in a year (referring to a personal log book containing records of all reviews and articles written for *The Guardian* including the period 1981 - 1991), New Romantics, The Who, Clapton, Emmylou Harris, Ray Charles, Gary Glitter the next day. It was great, you could write about anything. Adam and the Ants, The Grateful Dead, Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, all in the same week. So it was a really nice mix and *The Guardian* were very happy to just take that because they didn't have many, I think there was a guy called Geoffrey Cannon who was a very good writer who did a bit earlier on then Adam Sweeting did lots of rock stuff later on who is very good again, who is now freelance. So I tried to do all of those sort of different bits and because I'd been working in Africa earlier and was working in the BBC Africa series in the early 1970s and then on Panorama and was travelling in Africa an awful lot I tried to add in African music as well into the whole of that mix from very early on. I was just a fan of that sort of stuff and it sort of kind of fitted. So when that

sort of emerged, I started doing what later became known as world music, although it wasn't at the time, as well. Which is what I'm mostly doing now.

(incoming phone call) (12m27)

That's interesting that you mentioned world music actually, so did you just apply the same style that you applied to rock and pop?

Yes, but the less the people know about a thing the more you have to add in the sort of explanation factor. Whether it was always there I don't know but the idea in the back of the head is just to try and say (as with) anything that's in *The Guardian* you've got to say 'this is worth doing'. Obviously if it's someone like Gary Glitter you're sticking alongside The Grateful Dead, I mean that's a fun thing to do because they're so bizarre, or people know about them and that's great. But for things they don't know about you've got to give them something to latch onto to try and get them interested in them.

So you sort of spotted this, you were influenced by your travelling with the BBC, you thought it would be good?

Well I worked in a refugee camp before I went to Oxford for BSO and UN and things like that which got me a job at the BBC etc, etc. I've been quite keen of Africa ever since, and travelling. (13m34)

So did you go to your editor at *The Guardian* and say 'actually I think I can write about world music, I've travelled a lot, and '?

No, no it sort of organically popped up, I'd say 'there's this African bloke playing and he's interesting', 'oh, all right'.

So it was already over here?

Well I didn't write about it until it came over here. There was no point in writing about anything until there was either a record out or a concert out otherwise there was nothing for people to get hold of. I may have done a travel piece or a feature piece but in terms of a music page piece to say 'there is an amazing man in the south Sudan who's not made a record yet but he ought to' is not very interesting because you can't go off to listen to him. But once Ali Farka Toure came over here or Baaba Maal or King Sunny Ade, I suppose was the first one from Nigeria in the 1980s, or Fela Kuti, all Nigerians, and then there was, well anyway, all of that lot. There were South Africans before that, Hugh Masekela. (14m54)

So you started to see that emerging?

Yes. I'd say I always regarded that as part of the popular music scene which I, very much still is, that's now almost become regarded as somewhat specialist, but it's all the same stuff.

That is interesting because I did spot that world music got more and more coverage.

Yes.

How much time did you have between being given a recording to listen to, you've already said about concerts, and how quickly you had to respond?

The concerts were overnight, I think we did a record review once a week. (Referring to personal log book) Certainly by the 1980s there was a record review a week, it was quite a chunky one. Yes by the late 1980s there was a record review a week, early 1980s there was probably more concerts.

Do you think you'd have written differently if you'd had more time, i.e. an instant response verses a weeks worth of reflection?

No. No. No. Not in terms of writing. Journalism is a bit like Indian cooking. You've got to get your ingredients all ready first. So you've got to get the facts right and know what's there, you've got to get your different interviews right and your quotes right and then actually writing is quite a fast experience although the research, if you you're doing a longer piece, might take you a bit longer and it's also coming from current affairs where you're making films very, very fast and also it's just the nature of journalism, you have to write fairly fast otherwise you can't do it. Unlike academia really. (16m48)

Did different genres and sub-genres require different styles of writing?

Not really. Just simply that if it's world music, the less people know about a thing the more you've got to try and give them some context to say 'this is the pop music of Soweto that people dance to that's taken on a political edge' or whatever it happens to be, or 'this is the pop music of Nigeria with Fela Kuti that he uses to attack the government and he gets his club raided by the government an awful lot and they killed his mum' or whatever.

Who was your editor between 1981 - 1991?

I can't remember. I've probably had about fifteen editors over the years.

Quite a high turn over?

Yes they come and go.

Was there an arts page editor?

Yes.

Do you know who it was at that time?

There was one called Helen Oldfield at one time, I think she's still around. There was Stuart Jeffries might have been one. Was Tom Sutcliffe one? I can't remember. It changed a lot over ten years. Since the 1970s it's changed an awful lot.

Was there Roger Alton, from 1986?

Yes, he was fantastic. He just said 'go for it'.

Oh really, that's what I was going to ask, how hands on were they and did they get increasingly hands on over time?

They're more hands on now because more people know more about it all. I was probably much younger than the editors and this is probably no longer the case, or definitely no longer the case, therefore they're more likely to know now about the sort of stuff that I know about, or certainly know more about the indie stuff now. (19m14)

Can you think when that might have started to shift?

Oh I should think in the late 1980s sometime probably, late 1980s, 1990s. I started when I was a student and I was (doing) kind of precocious writing about stuff they didn't know about that I felt they ought to know about, but obviously over the years you get the younger editors coming up. So the editor I'm working for now knows far more about it than any of the editors, or is far more keen on it and goes to more concerts, I meet her at more concerts than any of the other editors who I would never expect to meet at a concert at all. But the current arts page editor, who is called Imogen Tilden, is a big fan, which is nice, it's good.

Were they interested in rock and pop, what were your editors' views on rock and pop?

Well presumably they liked what I was writing, or they thought the audience or readership liked it, otherwise they wouldn't have kept me doing it for so long. It's always hard to tell. (20m38)

Were they really prescriptive about who you wrote about?

No.

Did they just leave it completely up to you?

I mean looking at it now (referring to personal log book) it's an amazingly eclectic lot.

So you would just research who was on?

Yes I'd see who was on or people would ring me up, I mean like that was Gerry Lyseight who is a DJ and rock PR (who) was just on the phone saying 'come and see Terry Reid from just after the 1960s who is on at Dingwalls tonight'. (Referring to personal log book) You know in June 1981, it was Springsteen, June 1st. Commander Cody, Country Band Dingwalls June 2nd, The Beat, sort of post-punk band June 3rd, Rita Coolidge June 8th ... (subsequent name not heard) ... Shakin Stevens June 11th, George Benson June 12th, Pink Floyd June 13th, interview. So it's been very eclectic and it's one of the great strengths of *The Guardian*, that they took all the stuff, it's nice

So it was just left up to you, you could decide who you would go and see, and they trusted your judgement?

Yes. It's a pretty good job.

So they did get more hands on but that was probably towards the end of the 1980s?

I wouldn't have thought they were ever hands on actually at all. I think probably at the moment, they're only hands on in the sense that they know more about it and they'd suggest extra things that I might want to know about, that I might not have seen that they knew about.

So they're more clued up?

Yes they're much more clued up now which they weren't at the time, which is nice, it's great.

Because there's such a lot of different stuff, it's hard to cover everybody.

Did they ever disapprove of anything you saw, would you go and see something and submit your copy, and they'd say 'oh no you can't write about them, they're not mainstream enough?' they didn't express a view?

No. Never. No. They're good. Only in the very early days when you'd go and see The Doors, if they're a folk band, which was extraordinary at the time, but nobody had really heard of them. But folk music was kind of OK but pop music was, even post Beatles and Stones it was a bit sort of 'Hmm, is that what we should be writing about?' But they changed very fast. But that was very early on. The 1960s was a much more conservative era than people pretend now, they think it was all wild and wonderful but it wasn't it was actually very conservative and these things were happening at quite a small level and took a bit of time to break through and it wasn't until the 1970s that it broke through to the mainstream and there were vast amounts of money around and one got flown everywhere every weekend. You'd get a phone call saying 'do you want to go and see The Grateful Dead tomorrow in San Francisco?' and things like that, and you'd be at the BBC one Friday afternoon and somebody rang up and said 'what are you doing over the weekend?' and you'd say 'nothing' and they'd say 'OK, we're sending a package around to you' and the package had in it an invite to The Who's album launch at Universal Studios in Los Angeles and clipped to the back of that was an air ticket and clipped to the back of that was a three day pass for the Sunset Marquis which was an extremely nice little hotel in Los Angeles. But there was a time in the 1970s, and a bit in the 1980s, when the money around in the rock and roll thing was actually quite silly.

And The Guardian were OK with that?

Taking freebies? Sort of, yes. (24m46)

(Incoming phone call)(25m28)

Freebies. It's an interesting area. Some papers got difficult about them. Something like Bob Marley's concert in Jamaica was such an amazing event and if he wanted to take me over to meet him and his bods and they said 'come over' and they said 'yes' to it. But I never wrote about anybody because it was a good trip because if the person's not worth writing about, and there's such a lot of trips anyway, it was boring and the idea of going to New York was not that amazing anyway, unless there was somebody good to go and see.

And I guess if it was somebody you really weren't going to enjoy watching you wouldn't go anyway?

Exactly. Sure, sure, sure.

But there was no clamp down by The Guardian on that?

No, I think there might have been from time to time, I can't remember. Certainly those trips I went on.

I'm really interested in the idea of whether there was a hierarchy between the different music genres in terms of which might get the most page space or the best position on the page. Did The Guardian treat classical music or jazz as being superior perhaps to rock and pop or did they think 'actually no, we think rock and pop are superior' because of who they were aiming the newspaper at? I don't know who they saw as top of the tree?

It probably gradually moved from the early 1970s to now to taking over more and more space as it became perceived as being more and more sort of mainstream. Although whether in fact it's quite as massively popular now as it was in the 1980s I don't know. Rock and pop? Yes. In that album sales

have declined and all the rest of it. In the 1970s and 1980s it was going up and up and up all the time and peaked and to a certain extent other things have taken over. But I always got enough space certainly. I certainly got a big record review once a week and then occasional features and a couple of concerts a week. Well the concerts probably went down because I did work for other people a lot more. (28m08)

I noticed, and as you said Mick Brown earlier on did a few, but then by 1988, 89, 90 I've got Adam Sweeting, Bruce Desseau, Benny Green. He did jazz. All these other rock and pop names suddenly started to appear, and I wondered if they were expanding their rock coverage?

Possibly, and also because I was on BBC staff for years and years and years and with the BBC on Newsnight. I'd always been keen on foreign stuff so when I started going away an awful lot they had to have other people to do it and inevitably brought other people in. I mean three years ago I was in Iraq for three months during the war and so they were quite right to have other people as well anyway. But it's always been my sort of night job and not the day job but something that I took incredibly seriously.

I didn't know if that was some sort of sign that they were really expanding rock coverage?

A mixture of both, and a mixture of the fact that I'm often not always there and they had other people to do it.

Did you ever get the sense that the editors were elbowing classical out of the way a little bit to make more room for rock and pop?

I don't know because I've always been a freelance and so always been writing from here and in the old days one did go and take one's piece of paper in and say 'here's my review' so you knew everybody and got to know them. Now of course it's much more isolated, you sit upstairs in the office and hit a button and then hopefully it appears in the newspaper at some stage. So the inner workings of *The Guardian* I never knew much about because I've always been a freelance. I've always worked for the BBC, which I know lots about. But no they've always been very good to write for, they've been great.

You've already touched on this but did you notice any change in the types of articles you were being asked to write during that period, did you say less reviews? I've only taken a sample, I'm looking at one month each year and I think most of the stuff that showed against your name were reviews, but I only looked at one month so I might be wrong. I think there were some previews as well?

It all depends on whether I was around or not or if I was off somewhere.

You had some previews as well: Status Quo, Haircut 100, I didn't know if they got to the middle of the 1980s and if for example Roger Alton maybe came in and said 'we don't want as many reviews we want more features', anything like that?

The features number probably went up. (Referring to personal log book). I think the emphasis on record reviews probably went up during the 1980s, they got longer.

Do you know why that might have been?

I think record sales were going up and becoming more and more and more mainstream. There's some months where I was away and I just did records. Yes we've got a lot of records. By the end of the 1980s there was certainly a big record review every week. I'm sure there was in the early 1980s too. No, the records went up.

Record reviewing went up?

Yes in the early 1980s it looks like one a month and then it went to one per week. In fact it did go up, I'd forgotten about that, it was a major shock to the system. Yes they put up the number of records big time. (looking at an old example of a record review section) That was a typical one. I'd do one of those a week. I used to do about five, six or seven records. I must have been very antisocial. (33m16)

Did the 1988 redesign did that affect you?

I can't remember anything about it.

I listened to a recording of an interview with Edward Greenfield in *The Guardian* archive and he was talking about a 1988 redesign and I don't know if you remember any significant change around that time?

I don't remember any major change. I think the whole move of *The Guardian* going from big to smaller, which no longer seems small somehow, when you remember the big ones, really huge. I suspect it probably led to a cut down of the number of things you could get in. Not that I've actually done any work on looking at it. But I suspect the number of words must have gone down a bit. Well reviews used to be 500 and they went down to 350 I think, at some stage.

When was that?

In the 1990s probably, recently probably, yes. Or even more recently probably.

Just a quick question, but did you notice any change in terms of pictures accompanying your work during that time?

They got better and better and then they went into colour.

I'm pleased you said that because I'd noticed that there seemed to be an increase in the use of pictures from 1987.

It's been true of *The Guardian* altogether, that they've been more and more picture conscious, particularly with the re-launch. The colour now and the pictures are actually. Far more than they used to be.

Did you find that was helping you to get your criticism on the page because rock and pop made a good picture?

Oh yes. Oh sure. If you get a good picture it's always makes for a good piece, particularly a good feature. Always drove everything, and it makes people look at the piece.

I wondered if that helped elbow classical out of the way a little bit, the fact that rock and pop could get a more glamorous picture?

Maybe, maybe. Sure, sure, it's well possible. (35m57)

It's sometimes said that the quality of rock music criticism declined during the 1980s, this is with regards to the specialist music press in particular, and there's a book by Paul Gorman which talks about this where there are lots of quotes by *NME* writers and *Melody Maker* writers. To what extent do you agree with that?

I think it's possible simply because once the broadsheets started taking all this stuff on and taking it into the mainstream if you like, then there became less and less a role for the specialist rock and pop papers and probably some of their writers anyway swapped across and started writing for the broadsheets. I mean Richard Williams was the editor of the *Melody Maker* but he now does sport for *The Guardian* very well indeed. But once I think he was in your daily paper and there were the sort of things that myself or David Sinclair or Mark Cooper (who) used to write for us as well, do you know Mark Cooper? He's a very, very good writer, used to write for *The Guardian* occasionally and used to write for specialist papers and he is now is a big boss at the BBC, Creative Music he's head of, but he was a very good writer. But anyway, so people like that stopped doing things so much for the *NME* and the *Melody Maker* that were crucial at one stage. I think the more that all the mainstream papers, even *The Telegraph* started doing it, and everyone got into it, that was their decline really. So now you have kind of specialist, slightly more nostalgic maybe, pop magazines like *MOJO* which may be catering to a more specialist market and looking back to sort of great bands with much bigger features, adding more than we can do in the broadsheets. Or things like *Songlines*, which is the big world music magazine, which again would do a bit of what we're doing but do more of it. But once the newspapers started doing what the *NME* and the *Melody Maker* had been doing, because I should think in the early 1970s and the 1960s or whatever they had the field to themselves because they were the house magazine for all this new stuff that was going on but then to their fury it got discovered by everybody else.

I had a theory when I first started this that because some of those specialist music press writers went into the broadsheets the broadsheets might have adopted the style of the specialist press.

It's possible, for some of them, well possible.

Did the quality of your writing depend on the quality of the bands or performers that you were writing about, so would you produce your highest quality work if you were seeing a really good act for example?

I hope not. I think sometimes if you see somebody really bad it inspires you to write something more amusing or entertaining. It's easiest to write about someone who's really, really good or someone who's really, really bad I suppose. If someone is mediocre it's flippin difficult to write anything original about them. But if someone is so dreadful it's a joy to write about. Though I don't like writing about unknowns who are dreadful because there's no point in writing about them. So I tend to be nice to people rather than slag people off because there's just no point in slagging people off if you've never heard of them anyway. Once they're famous and they do something terrible, fine. (40m25)

Again Gorman suggests that only great music gets great writing, and therefore if there was a decline in the 1980s it might have been actually due to a decline in the quality of music itself.

Right. Sounds pretentious to me. I would never put any of mine down as great writing anyway, hopefully it's good writing.

Did you notice any changes in music advertising at *The Guardian* between 1981 - 1991?

I think that as soon as the advertisers realised that there was a way of getting adverts they got more and more excited by it yes, sure. I mean newspapers love adverts. I've never been told write about so and so because there will be an advertising tie in.

So you were never specifically asked to write about something?

No, never. But if I wrote about something and there was advertising I'm sure they would be quite happy.

Were you ever getting your copy pushed out of the way or cut down to make room for an advert?

Yes it happens all the time. If there's a huge advert on a page things will get cut back sometimes.

Did you feel that was happening more to you than to maybe classical or jazz writers?

I've no idea. It didn't happen very often. Just occasionally there'd be a big advert on a page and then something yes, they've only got room for this much this week and not that much.

I'd love to try and speak to an editor and say 'if an advert came in, what would you cut, classical, jazz or pop?'

Roger Alton is very jolly. He's the editor of the *Observer* now, he's very important. He's a very nice chap I liked him a lot, he's extremely good fun, and he might talk about *The Guardian* because he's not there anymore.

I'll give it a try.

Give him my regards. Yes it would be interesting to find his take on how he would deal with this stuff. He's quite laid back. Give him a go. (43m09)

So music marketing didn't affect your articles really?

No, not as far as I know, no. I mean I was never asked, 'so and so's going to give us advertising if you'll write about them, so please do it', no.

The Wapping Dispute – did that affect your writing?

No.

Or your career in any way?

No.

And what about the repercussions from Wapping in terms of the print technology changes, and the fact there were more rock and pop and specialist magazines coming on to the market.

There were more there?

There was *Q* magazine, I don't know if that had an impact on the broadsheets?

I don't think so.

What about *The Independent*, did that have an impact on what you chose to write about or the way that you wrote?

No not really. I'm writing a piece for them this afternoon. They've been quite good at it as well. They've done lots of world music. I suppose the more people were writing about it, the fact that *The Telegraph* and *The Independent* were there and were giving it space as well, the same sort of stuff, makes a paper much more competitive and if you're the only paper doing it you're much more vulnerable, but once everyone else started doing it that's a good thing because they realised that it's something they've all got to cover. As the rock pop audience if you like got older, they were probably in their twenties so the youngest lot in the in 1970s by the 1980s they're in their thirties so they're hopefully more *Guardian* readers and so forth, and then *The Telegraph* started writing about it and does record reviews and world music stuff the whole time, it's now become part of the mainstream. So once it's part of the mainstream there was no danger at all, which I suppose happened more and more during the 1980s, that one was going to be regarded as some sort of strange anomaly and knocked off, which when I very first started I'd sort of say 'lets try and get this stuff in' and they were going 'who are you and what is this stuff', not in those strong words.

So it validated what you were doing in a way, that other magazines and newspapers were covering it? I think it became part of the mainstream, something you'd expect to find in every paper going.

And there wasn't an attempt to make record reviewing look more like the record reviews that appeared in *Q* magazine or anything like that?

No. I don't very often read other magazines I'm afraid, I occasionally write for them but. (46m17)

You've said already that the editors were quite hands off so it doesn't sound like they were ringing up saying 'there's this new magazine, they're doing x, y or z, we need you to do this' or '*The Independent* is doing this and you've got to change', there was none of that going on?

No, no, no.

The political climate of the time, Thatcherism. I've been reading your book about how pop was used in the election campaign, but did the climate of Thatchersim affect broadsheet music writing in any way?

No. I suppose that *The Guardian* which was perceived at least to have more of a left wing stance in those days, or being an anti-Thatcherite paper, would have been interested in things like Red Wedge and Billy Bragg and all that sort of stuff, which I was certainly very interested in. So they, whether this is true or not I don't know, but I would suspect that they probably gave us more space for things like that than *The Telegraph* may have done or *The Times* might have done that were more conservative papers. But I'd have to look through the archives to see whether that's true or not. But certainly anything like, because I do politics at the BBC and music at *The Guardian*, anything sort of political and music crossover has always been something that's interested me. It's a good area and that's something *The Guardian* would certainly be interested in, and was interested in.

Do you think they were using rock and pop coverage to gain the youth market for political purposes? The papers?

Yes?

They've always wanted the youth market.

Were there any changes in the music media in that time, things like the compact disc, stereo, video recorders, MTV, was there anything like that which you think might have had a direct impact on broadsheet music writing, rock and pop music writing and if so how?

When did CDs come in? 1990s?

It was towards the end of this period wasn't it; I don't know when they really took off though in the mainstream

Probably early 1990s I'd have thought.

I can imagine you were getting CDs sent though the post instead of records?

Yes, well these (records) came for years and years and years and are now replaced by CDs.

Were you getting lots of re-releases to review or anything like that, or the 'best of' I don't know the Bee Gees, that kind of thing?

That much more than CDs because CDs they repackaged everything, because with CDs they were very lazy, the record companies just wanted to make a lot of money so they repackaged all their old catalogue and resold it all again, which was all a bit boring. I suppose with a few exceptions, pop music began to run out of steam a bit during the 1980s, it wasn't my favourite decade. Things like the punks at the beginning at the decade were great and then things like The Pogues were brilliant and then the advent of world music which started happening during then, so there were lots of different things coming in. Whereas if it had been straight rock pop I'd get rather less interested in keep writing about it. So it was a curious decade in a way. (50m39)

Did you find that perhaps at the beginning or the period you were writing about rock and pop but by the end of the period you were identifying more subgenres, breaking it down into more category groups, I don't know if that emerged?

Well the last things I wrote in the 1980s were about Neil Young and David Byrne of Talking Heads. The first thing in the 1990s was Mano Negra, that's sort of world music, The Stranglers still going, Cowboy Junkies, Happy Mondays, Big Mandela concert, yes there was more world music creeping in there I think by the beginning of the 1990s. June Tabor, the folk revival started again in the 1990s to some extent. Christy Moore, 1990, Pogues 1990 played at Wembley, Baaba Maal 1990, Youssou n' dour 1990, Africa coming in a big way. The Fall. So yes, new stuff started to come in towards the end of it so it sort of cheered itself up thanks to global influences really. In the same way we had reggae in the 1970s which cheered things up, Bob Marley, which had kind of run its course by the middle of the 1980s, the whole Jamaica music scene.

I wondered, with all the magazines that started to emerge, if things started to get categorised more, so if at the beginning of the decade it was all just rock and pop, but by the end of the period you had world music, folk music, rap music?

I suppose by the end of the 1980s I had been doing it for a bit and I was older than I had been when I started doing it in the 1970s and the 1960s, so I was interested in writing about different sort of stuff and luckily different stuff came along otherwise it would have just been writing about new young pop bands I was no longer the ideal person to do it really because I was much more interested in other things. I still like new young punk bands but luckily the whole thing changed which is good.

So you said there weren't any music magazines that influenced your writing or the editorial direction of *The Guardian*?

I don't think so no, because all these magazines had pretty small circulations compared to a broadsheet anyway, and in a way they kind of reinforced what one was doing, and after the demise of the *NME* and the *Melody Maker* it was good that these new specialist things did arrive. (54m25)

During that period 1981 – 1991, how did you perceive your relationship with your readers?

It's hard to tell, I hoped they liked me.

Were you thinking you were more like a detached expert, or a consumer guide, or a friend?

It's always hard being a journalist isn't it because you never know what your readers think of you. It's very nice when people come up to you and say they've been reading you. The Asian Dub Foundation came up to me and said 'we were reading you in the 1980s when we were at school'. I said 'that's very nice, I didn't know that', and 'you were writing about stuff we loved', so that's all very flattering. But it's very hard isn't it, I mean you just write and it's isolated in a way because you try not to be influenced by anything anyone else is saying or thinking and say what you see and think and promote the things that, obviously one's aware of fashions and what's selling or what's not selling.

Would you say you were on the readers' side, or were you on the newspapers side, or were you on the side of the artists or the PR departments?

I suppose if anything I think I was on the side of good artists who needed promoting. Which is the same as being on the readers' side because you are saying, I mean the thing I like doing best is listening to something new or something interesting and saying 'you may not have heard this yet but it's actually worth checking out', which is much more interesting I think than giving a flowery critique of the latest Bob Dylan album, which is also worth doing and is very interesting and good fun

to write about, or slagging somebody off. But new things I've always found most interesting I guess. (56m14)

Did you feel that your relationship was changing with your readers or the music industry during that period in any way?

Not really no. I mean hopefully one's readers are growing up with you and if they liked you then they still like you and presumably the fact of doing it (for) so long one hopes one's been getting something right. It's hard to tell, because you don't get any, it's not like making a film and seeing what the audience reaction is because you are not being reviewed yourself.

That's the end of 'Part A' as I've called it, is there anything you think I've missed about the style of your writing or your influences?

Style is a difficult thing to write about oneself because I just write. I know what I'm trying to do.

Was there anything else in the political or media or political climate that was influencing you in that period?

No I don't think so. (57m36)

... (Part B) ...

If I could ask you just to summarise in a sentence or two how music journalism in the broadsheets or *The Guardian* changed during 1981 – 1991, could you provide a closing sentence or two?

I don't think it changed in the 1980s all that much. It changed much more in the 1970s really because it went from being completely unknown to being part of the fabric of life thanks to the Stones and The Who. Pink Floyd then made it a respectable genre I suppose which carried over into the 1980s, though the early 1980s had a sort of I suppose an upheaval of punk and 'how do we do all that?' that was late 1970s really, but there was you know 'who are these Sex Pistols people, shall we take them seriously or not?' Which is always good fun to have someone like that coming along and shaking people up. But I suppose it became gradually more of the established part of the paper that people would expect there to be a music feature or record reviews and interviews and so forth throughout the 1980s and I suspect, not looking at the other broadsheets, but I suspect that some of the other papers like *The Telegraph* and *The Times*, who were probably more conservative, gradually caught up with *The Guardian* or tried to catch up with *The Guardian* over that period.

Yes *The Guardian* led the way a little bit, didn't it?

Yes I like to think we did. Yes. But go to Roger Alton, he's very jolly, mention me to him. He might not give you two hours but he might give you half an hour.

Well what you've given me is absolutely fantastic, that's great. Have I missed anything?

No, no, no.

(Referring to personal log books)

Those are wonderful, they look like they should belong in some archive somewhere, I feel like I should be looking at them in the Bodleian library or something. They're fantastic. I feel like I should have white gloves on. There's so many each month.

There's an awful lot, it's terrifying, absolutely terrifying.

How did you sleep, if you slept at all!

I don't know how I did it. I had a day job as well, the BBC still employed me, it's extraordinary.

And it's just something that you started doing when you were at University, that just carried on as a hobby almost?

Yes, absolutely. I was a bad folk singer at University, well at school I had a guitar and played with friends, and everybody wanted to be folkies, but nobody was much writing about it.

So you would just finish work at the BBC, hop on a tube and just go off to wherever you would go?

Yes. Some hapless girlfriend would be dumped in the pub while I scribbled away for twenty minutes.

And I'm guessing that you've got all of the clippings as well?

They're upstairs, there's an office upstairs, they're fairly chaotic.

And did you go through correcting them if ever they printed them with spelling mistakes?

Oh no, no, no. Most of mine are in piles, there's a whole pile of 1980s stuff, I just went through it last night that I haven't actually put in books yet, they're stuck in the original papers, there's probably a lot in the garage.

You should publish a 'collected works', or 'best of'

I don't know. It all seems fairly trivial at the time but then twenty years later these people are still existing and what they were doing has actually become more important and some of the events like David Bowie's breaking up The Spiders From Mars or Bob Marley at the Peace Concert in Kingston or Fela Kuti in his club in Nigeria, I was very lucky to be there. It's like all journalism, it's like seeing bits of history, it's like being Lebanon when it's being attacked or being in Vietnam or being in Iraq or whatever. I'm just interested in being there and seeing it. Except this is music and it's actually the sort of stuff you'd pay to go along to and you're lucky enough to get free tickets. (1h30m47)

(Part B)

They (Editors) weren't tampering too much?

No, no, no. Occasionally the subs ring up and say 'we don't understand that sentence what do you mean?' Which I'm delighted to (explain), they're a very civilized lot as you'd expect. I've been very lucky to do it for so long, it's been very good fun.

Millions of people I'm sure would love to be doing it.

And to do Newsnight at the same time as well has been doubly lucky really. I'm a workaholic but it hasn't really felt like doing a job because it's been enormous fun.

Interview with Hilary Finch
25th September 2006, at the Thistle Victoria Hotel, London

Part A

Just so that I can get my facts right from the start, you appeared in my database from 1981 through to 1991 although I'm guessing you were writing before 1981, when did you start exactly?

Yes, now I'm very bad on dates so I'm relying on your database for the facts in a way. I can't remember when I joined *The Times*, it must have been about 1980 or 1981 I would think, because I worked on *The Times Educational Supplement* which I joined in 1976. Now I can't remember if it was 1980 or 1981 that I moved from full-time salaried employment at *The Times Educational Supplement*. I was Assistant to the Arts and Literary Editor which was a wonderful all-round apprenticeship in journalism from every angle, I was commissioning, writing, editing, cutting hot metal in those days, it was pre new technology and I was gradually writing more. Then when Stanley Sadie retired from *The Times* they rang and said 'would I be willing to do the odd overnight night review?' having seen that I was writing on classical music and dealing with it in *The Times Educational Supplement*. As I say, I can't remember the exact date but it must have been about 1980 or 1981. I began overlapping and then I realised I couldn't do such a high pressured job all through the day and do overnight reviews as well, so I took the plunge and went freelance at that point hoping that I could make up my earnings by other freelance work, which of course gradually I did, I have to say probably not to the same extent if I'd stayed on the salary, but you know. (2m21)

So thinking about that period from 1981 or 1980, whenever you started, I'm interested in the style that you adopted, where did you get the style from?

Well I've never been conscious of writing with any particular style. I mean I can remember for the first five years or so being very anxious as to whether I was writing in an acceptable way but one was given no guidance at all and no feedback at all. My great mentor was William Mann, he didn't invite me on the paper John Higgins the then Arts Editor invited me onto the paper but he was quite sort of old fashioned, quite distant, hands-off, you dealt with him at an entirely professional level, you didn't chat much. William Mann was then Chief Music Critic, and I was one of his assistants, I can remember asking him once 'look Bill am I doing the right thing, are you satisfied with what I'm doing?' and all he said was 'oh yes darling'. I just had to build up my own confidence and assurance and do what was right by my own eyes, one had no advice. I suppose when one starts anything, whether it's sort of primary creative work or secondary creative work what you read and what you experience of other people's work is filtering in and so there may have been subconscious influences, but I certainly wasn't aware of having a model for any style, no.

Did you feel that there was a great canon of classical music writers that you had to follow in the footsteps of?

Yes I did, I felt very aware of that, I think more so than the young critics do today because I was at the tail end of what was thought of as 'the greats', you know the great gentleman critics, Peter Heyworth, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, William Mann himself, all of whom had done nothing in their life but be music critics, well I mean they'd done lots of other things, but I mean they made a living out of being a music critic and that was a highly esteemed job. They were on the radio, most if not all of them had written books, and most if not all of them were male, apart from Joan Chissell who was also on *The Times*. There weren't many middle aged colleagues then, they were all sort of, it seemed to me, males in their 50s and 60s which seemed terribly old to me then and I did feel I was a bit of whipper snapper. I think the feeling has changed very much now. People like Peter Heyworth and Desmond Shawe-Taylor were upper crust essayists who wrote in quite a sophisticated academic way, one felt that there was definitely something one had to live up to, while at the same time you felt you were on the cusp, that gradually through the 1980s what was being expected of you was something rather different. So that, while you had a standard to live up to, that wasn't quite the tone of voice that was required any more. (6m21)

Did you have to adapt your personal style to suit the house-style?

Let me think. Not really. There was *The Times* style book but the Subs dealt with that, they tidied up your copy to comply with what was then *The Times* style book. But as regards more general tone of voice and style no there wasn't. I think everyone on the arts page then spoke with quite an individual voice and the only thing one ever had any sort of guidance about was, for me anyway, trying to write more leanly. I've always had a temptation to overwrite or use too many adjectives I think, and one

was aware that probably less was more. But that wasn't to do with *Times* style that was just to do with one's own sort of discipline and trying to write more leanly, more simply, more clearly, which I think applies to any writer trying to hone their craft.

Was that something that Editors were asking for as that period progressed, that you wrote more leanly?

No. If anything, within that decade, which was as you are realising a crucial one, it was a decade of change, if there was any one thing it would be to be more accessible. The word was only just beginning to be used then but you know that you weren't writing for an academic organ you were writing for a daily newspaper, even though it was still a broadsheet and it was at the top of the tree, as they thought then. But yes, while your criticism had to be to the point and stringent and focussed, your vocabulary should probably be more accessible to the man in the street than that of your predecessors. (9m02)

So during this period you were being asked to write in a different way to your predecessors?

Yes, this is all in retrospect, it was never said directly or overtly but in retrospect if in say 1985, in the middle of your period, I had written in the tone of voice and used the vocabulary of my elders that would not have been what was wanted then because although it was nothing like what we reach now, in terms of a sort of wide tabloid appeal, at the same time they were becoming aware that it was not just classical music specialists that were reading classical music criticism. They wanted a wider audience to be reached by it and this coincided very much with the advent of feature writing. I might be jumping ahead here but in the 1980s (there) was the big change in that the proportion between criticism and feature writing changed almost to the point where it was, well I wouldn't want you to quote 50/50, but very many more features were written, celebrity features were written, and that was obviously to reach out to a wider range of people because you were focussing on the performers and not just the musicology of the composers. I don't know if you're interested, but I feel sort of slightly responsible, guilty about that in a way because I saw that features were being done on other fields and I remember when we had virtually no features on classical music, offering one on Yehudi Menuhin because I had a contact and could do an interview with him, and (they said) 'oh yes, an interview with Yehudi Menuhin', and I remember that was one of the first big photo, big personality, pieces because they were not the norm then. I mean you virtually got none in the classical music field, you just got the overnight reviews.

Can you remember when that was roughly, would that have been at the beginning of the 1980s?

Very early 1980s, it may have been 1982 or so. If you could find the date when Menuhin's Live Music Now! organisation began it was then, because I pegged it to that. So if you can find that date it would be that year.

And they were really, really keen about that, they could see that that was a new thing coming?

Yes and also, again I might be pre-empting one of your questions, but I can't remember the date when *The Independent* came into being but when it did they made their mark of course with photo journalism. They had to provide something new which was very big stunning photos at that point which also helped one in a way in placing features because that gave the opportunity for competing with *The Independent*, getting lovely big photos in of your subject which of course you don't do with overnight reviews. So it broadened the brief of the music critic because gradually features were becoming more and more welcome because a) they broadened the readership as it was seen and b) they provided photo opportunities to compete with or get equal with or be better than *The Independent*.

I noticed that you wrote on classical music, contemporary music and I've got another category which I've called contemporary-classical music as well. did you have to adopt a different mode of writing for those different sub-genres?

No absolutely not. I mean we were expected to cover anything we were asked, right from early music to contemporary. You weren't asked if you had any specialist knowledge you were just supposed to go. If you weren't a specialist it was up to you whether you phoned up about it first or not. I can remember saying 'well I don't really know much about that' and they'd say 'never mind, you must go', and learn on the job as it were. Slight exception is that I probably did less contemporary music in those years because Paul Griffiths covered that because he was known to be a specialist on that. Gradually one's own specialisms and interests grew and they realised that I was most interested in the human voice which is why I probably did more vocal recitals, more to do with the human voice and singers.

Were you a singer yourself?

I did take some lessons in singing myself, but not to perform, just to make myself more familiar with what was involved. I always only ever wanted to write about things rather than do it. But I've always been fascinated by the human voice and I do love singing. (14m46)

How did you and/ or your Editor decide which artists would be covered, did they leave it up to you completely or did they give you a list every month?

Every paper does this differently and *The Times* always had the monthly schedule drawn up by the Chief Music Critic who first of all was William Mann for me, then Paul Griffiths, I can't remember because then we sort of lost the hierarchy a bit, I'm trying to think who drew up, but anyway either the Arts Editor or the Chief Music Critic would draw up the monthly schedule and would on that chose what was to be covered and chose which critic should cover what, and it's still like that even today, it's never changed. So you get a music schedule, and for each day there'll be two or three concerts which are chosen by that person and allocated. Sometimes, well you know, 'yes it's a song cycle so Hilary will do that', but (it's) by no means hard and fast. You could be asked to do something quite out of your field just because of the way the schedule goes or who's free or who's on holiday or whatever. But the critics never had any say on *The Times*, we do what we're told on *The Times*, it's not democratic. On some other papers it's more democratic.

Does that apply to all genres, so jazz, pop and rock?

I'm not sure. I wouldn't like to say, I don't know.

So you don't see the whole schedule?

No, no we only see our subject schedule. I've no idea how the dance, theatre, jazz schedules work. (16m51)

I was going to ask 'did they get more prescriptive over time?' but it sounds like they were quite prescriptive from the start anyway?

As to what was done and who's to do it? Yes, it was virtually set in stone. I mean if there was something for some reason you felt you couldn't possibly do for any reason you could always ring up and say so, or do a swap with a colleague, or if you had to go to a funeral or something you'd just do a swap. But when I say set in stone obviously then if people started prevaricating the whole thing would fall apart, so you try to leave it as it is really.

Do you ever get to see how the Editors come up with that list? How do they decide?

It's a hell of a job to do. I was asked to do it once for a brief while and it's very onerous. I mean I think they just get all the season booklets and it's not just London of course because we try and cover the regions as well. I don't know how Richard, as it is today, does it. I would just think he judges which are the most important. I mean at the moment every orchestra's opening of the season, major orchestral concerts, premieres of new works, major chamber music and vocal concerts. This is probably the most commonly asked question 'how do you decide?' but you get a feeling of what's vital. There's so, so little space, which we've been saying from the word go, the complaint about space has been since the first day I wrote, there's never enough space. You know, how many concerts are going on in London every day? Important ones let alone fringe and interesting and maybe ones, and then the regions as well. So you just have to judge what is the thing that readers need to know about most, and we're a paper of record, what should be down there for history to look back on as having been reported on? So when people say 'oh you know but it's such an obscure opera by Cimarosa being put on by Bampton Opera' you have say 'well, yes but can you say we should do that rather than the opening of the London Philharmonic's season?'. No you can't.

So if you were made aware of something and you felt you really should cover that, would you have the freedom to suggest that and put forward your own ideas?

Oh yes, we can put something forward, oh yes absolutely. I could ring up and say 'look Richard I don't know if you've noticed', and he might have noticed it and said 'yes, but I had to reject that because of so and so', or he might say 'gosh, no, thanks for drawing that to my attention, lets try and squeeze it in'.

So you've always had that freedom, back in the 1980s?

Yes, that hasn't changed at all. I mean they're always open to suggestions but you know that the schedule has been drawn up with an eye to what the space is going to be, therefore adding something is always going to be problematic. It's simply space all the time. (20m14)

...(section of text anonymised)

Music and Musicians is a publication that seems to have cropped up quite a lot.

Oh yes I'd forgotten that, it's defunct now, did I write for *Music and Musicians*? I think I did a bit, but you know it stopped, it discontinued pretty soon into my own career so I think I wrote very little for that. Then there was a gap, and I mean all sorts of things there was one called *Fugal* or *Fugue* or something? I can't remember. There was a period when people were desperately trying to form a classical music magazine again, apart from *The Musical Times* and *Tempo* which were more academic, but a general music magazine and that happened when the *BBC Music Magazine* was born. Before that nobody had been able to have the financial backing to keep a general distribution classical music magazine going. They all failed, and it wasn't until *BBC Music Magazine*, with the backing of the BBC came, that that became something that lasted and is still going today.

How was writing for *The Times* different to writing for anybody else?

Oh very different, because for one thing it was a newspaper so I've always felt I'm reporting as much as I'm adjudicating, though obviously as a critic you have to adjudicate as well, but you are a reporter. Although this is the eternal question, 'who does read you?', obviously people that have no interest in classical music at all are probably unlikely to read classical music reviews, on the other hand they might; if you're sitting on a train and you're desperate you might read everything. So I've always believed, and I think the Editors have too, that you've got to write so that it can be understood by absolutely everyone, even someone with no knowledge of classical music, while at the same time being stimulating and focussed enough for those who know quite a bit about classical music. Whereas in a classical music magazine, like *BBC Music Magazine*, you know you've got a tame audience so you can write as much as a music specialist as you like because it's about music and nothing else.

Thinking again back to that period 1981 – 1991, did you sense that there was a hierarchy between the different music genres?

Within classical or between classical and others?

With things like classical, jazz and pop, rock music?

That's a very good question. I would say at the beginning of that period, I mean my perception, and that's all I can offer, is that there was a hierarchy and classical music was at the top. A crucial point happened, now it might be out of your period, I've a feeling it might have been about 1991 or 1992, I've often looked back and wished I could date it, of course these things are never precise, where when you had a strap or a heading or a division within a Saturday magazine or something, when you had a division it used to say 'music', 'jazz', 'pop', 'rock'. Now 'music' was what was understood as classical music. You'd then qualify it by saying pop music, rock music, jazz but 'music' meant classical. Now the exact reverse is true, so if people talk about 'music' they mean what I call popular music, rock, jazz, folk, rap anything you like, hip hop and if you want to know that you're talking about Mozart and Beethoven you have to use the word 'classical' music. Now that was to me a very significant point in journalism, when the headings and the straps began to become 'classical music' rather than 'music'. You see listings, again this might pre-empt something you're going to ask, but listings happened during this crucial decade too, the birth of listings. Now again at the beginning of that period the headings would be 'music', 'jazz', 'rock', 'folk' and that 'music' was understood to be classical music. Now under listings you'll get 'music' and then all the various genres and then at the end this thing called 'classical music' which is a small, elitist, special interest (listing). That was a big change. I wouldn't say it happened between 1981 – 1991 but definitely between 1981 and say 1995.

I had noticed that, it sometimes said 'music' and then it would say 'rock and pop' and I thought it seemed really strange that they were separating them out.

At the start of my career if you said 'music' people knew you meant classical and you'd have to say pop or rock if that's what you meant. It's a very significant thing. (26m54)

So if classical was at the top of the hierarchy at the beginning of the period, did you find that as that decade went on that classical was getting elbowed out of the way, getting less space or being pushed down the page or anything like that?

Now that has happened but I'm not sure it's within that period, it might have happened more in the 1990s, it was such a gradual thing. I would say within the period we're talking about it, if anything it was the emphasis on features that pushed classical music reviews, elbowed them out a bit and made less space for them, and as I say I always feel guilty because I suggested that feature on Yehudi Menuhin which I think was the first classical music feature at *The Times*, certainly one of the first. But it used to be, I remember, visually the page was a pretty tight fit like a patchwork quilt of short reviews, well once you got a great big feature at the top with a great big photo, and this was thought to be terribly vulgar when it began, very down market and vulgar, it halved your space for reviews. So I would say within this period it wasn't so much elbowed out by the other genres of music as by features. (28m22)

Did the number of classical writers reduce or the number of classical words being commissioned reduce at all?

In that period? Yes. I wouldn't have thought so, no. I wouldn't have thought so at all. If anything, because again this period was the crucial time with Thatcher and everything for increasing private sponsorship, you know companies sponsoring music and the real capitalist model rather than the state, so big companies and banks sponsoring education programmes. I would have thought the commissioning of classical music increased if anything during that time, I mean only statistics will find this out, but my impression is certainly no, if anything there was more being written, more writing, more openings for writing and more new works being commissioned.

But that possibly tailed off in the 1990s?

Then it tailed off again, yes exactly.

I know it's outside my period but do you know what made it tail off, was there a particular event?

I think, you know, it relates to the much bigger picture that the 1980s were this unrealistic boom period of everything; the affluence, the number of restaurants opening, cafes opening, and then there was, again I'm not an economist and I'm not a historian and my command of dates is weak, but wasn't it about 1992 or 1993 that there was quite a big cut back, quite a big bang or something, something happened economically? It was realised that that level of growth couldn't continue and people began to be severely worried because funds were being withdrawn from both commissioning classical music and from supporting writing about it, I mean it gradually began to shrink. Record companies were going mad in the 1980s issuing CDs at an enormous rate and gradually, it is a matter of economics, but something happened and that money wasn't there any more.

So you've already said more features. In terms of previews, did you think that there were more or less previews?

Well that began in the 1980s, definitely. We were I think again the first, or certainly one of the first, to invent the idea of previews, I mean that was something that just never existed. Again I wish I could give you the date, maybe it was 1983 they started, I'm not sure, I'm so bad at dates, you'd have to look that up. But we had this new insert called *Preview*, very naively named, just *Preview* and Richard Williams was the Editor. He set that up and it was decided that we should provide this service, I might be slightly inaccurate, I mean maybe *The Independent* did it first and we immediately copied it or maybe we invented it, again you'd have to just double check because things were happening so fast then. But this was all to do with competition and what a newspaper could provide over and above what the rest of the newspapers could provide, and this service to readers providing them with a free *Time Out* really, you didn't have to pay for a *Time Out* anymore, it would be within your paper. People probably don't realise that that never existed, that was something brand new and it kicked off enormously, it's an industry in itself now, it's a pull-out in itself, *The Knowledge*, you know. I mean there are people whose entire job is writing preview columns.

So there was an increase in previews and increase in features?

Well almost within that period the birth of both of those. They both took off and have been going strongly ever since really. This was all tied in with fierce competition with the birth of *The Independent*, the boom of the Thatcher years, trying to outstrip one another, trying to provide more and more to compete. It was an era of expansion really. (33m46)

I noticed as well that *The Independent* seemed to be really keen on obituaries, it had far more music obituaries than any of the other papers, and some of the others particularly at *The Guardian* but less so at *The Times*, seemed to catch on.

That's interesting, I wasn't aware of that. In that period I wasn't interested so in obituaries. One is supposed to get more interested in obituaries the older one gets. I hardly looked at them in those days to tell you the truth.

I wondered if that was the impact of *The Independent*?

I'm sure, many of these things were.

You've already mentioned pictures as well, but did you notice that pictures were increasingly being added to your work?

I suppose they were but mainly in opera, obviously. I suppose in order to make the page look more pictorial, to make the visual image a more important part of the page, the opera reviews would be moved up to the top because that was the obvious thing to illustrate. With other reviews, not a lot. You'd get the odd mug shot of a conductor or a musician, but not a lot.

Was that something that started during that period or was it fairly consistent during that time?

It's difficult to say. I would think there was a steady increase, yes. It seems to me that there was more and more interest devoted to pictures and less and less to words. (36m08)

Just back to this idea of hierarchy again, were you jostling for space with other music journalists from different genres?

I wasn't aware of that, no, no. I would say that's definitely the case now but not then. I honestly can't remember but it didn't seem to be a problem then, no.

It wasn't terribly competitive?

No, no, not for us no.

There's lots written about rock criticism in the specialist music press, the *NME* and that kind of thing, and you get academics and ex-rock journalists saying that there was a decline in the quality of rock music journalism during the 1980s. I just wondered if you felt if there was any decline in classical music journalism in the 1980s as a parallel thing?

In the quality of writing or the quantity?

In the quality particularly.

I wouldn't have thought so, no. No I wouldn't. There always are people who think the past is better than the present so there are always people saying 'of course people don't write like Desmond Shawe-Taylor' which takes us right back to the beginning. But no, I mean there were pretty good people writing then and you know there were my generation which was up and coming and then there were the Allan Blyth's the Robert Henderson's, or William Mann was still writing, I can't remember when he stopped. But you know, the older guard was still around. So no, I would say the standard was pretty well keeping up.

Would you say it has gone down hill in the 1990s perhaps?

Are you speaking just about *The Times* now?

Yes, well *The Times* or all newspaper journalism.

This is entirely personal. I don't think the standard of writing has gone down. If there's been a shift in the 1990s it's been a shift away from specialism. So there are people with less specialist knowledge writing, or readers with less specialist knowledge. But I think the quality of writing, of simply you know 'a good read', there are always in my mind some writers who are better writers than others but I would not say there's been a decline, no. Others might disagree with me. It will be a very personal perception

Did the quality of your writing depend upon the quality of the performers that you wrote about?

No, I'd say absolutely not. No connection at all. No.

Because when I did my MA in rock music journalism there was a theory that the quality of the performers declined in the 1980s and therefore that's why the writing changed.

I see. No don't think we can make any correlation there at all.

Did you notice any changes in music advertising during the 1980s?

I don't think I could comment on that, either I wasn't observant enough or interested enough. No I couldn't give you any useful information on that.

You didn't find that rock concert adverts or album adverts were pushing you off the page or anything like that?

No. I would say that came quite a bit later where ads actually affected my consciousness. I mean for people working in the office they're always worried about ads because I've been on that side of the fence and I've been doing page make up and I remember thinking 'oh good another ad'. But it doesn't impact upon the writers much. I would say the consciousness of ads pushing (copy) off the page didn't affect me or impact upon me until the late 1990s. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I wasn't aware of it. I wasn't aware of Subs ringing me up and saying 'I'm terribly sorry you've got half the number of words tonight because we've got an ad', not at all in that period, no.

So music marketing didn't affect you articles in any way at all?

Not that I was aware of. (42m15)

So the Wapping Dispute then. How exactly did the Wapping Dispute affect your writing and/ or your career?

That's a very good question. I would say without doubt it lowered morale, because it was so unpleasant on both sides. There was such bad feeling between the management and the workers, whether you mean the print unions or whether you mean the journalists. It was just thoroughly unpleasant for everyone. I can remember, I have to get this right, because with us it was connected with moving from New Printing House Square to Wapping but it was also overnight as it were. The whole thing behind it was the putting in of the new technology, so people had been secretly being trained in New Printing House Square, the Subs and the Editors, on computers, ready for the move which happened overnight, very dramatically. I was taking in my copy by hand into New Printing House Square and Harry Evans came on to the floor at about ten o'clock and said 'pack your bags, we're going tonight' I mean it was so dramatic, and there'd been weeks of moles working away at setting up the new technology. Because the dispute was about that, that's why (there were) all the redundancies, the whole thing was to do with putting in the new technology. In retrospect of course it had to be done and Murdoch was a pioneer in doing it. But at the time of course people with less vision couldn't see why it was necessary and it just seemed like a great big capitalist takeover and masses of jobs being lost. It was an absolutely seminal change in the whole of newspaper production, and we were right in the thick of it. You see now we don't go into the building at all but then we were expected to go in quite a lot because we weren't using email, we didn't have home computers, you were expected to go into the office even if you were of freelance status, once a month once a week even, I can't remember, but a lot, to see your Editor to talk about things, to pick up your post, even to deliver copy by hand. During the dispute we had to be bussed in in armoured coaches and they had to be at secret points so that the pickets with weapons couldn't bang you over the head. I mean it was physical, it was violent. I remember you got a phone call or you got some sort of communication, because you must remember this was before home computers, the timetable for coaches this week was such, and you couldn't tell anyone where the pick up points were, they were secret pick up points. There was one I remember at Charing Cross Station, Embankment and the coaches were armoured so that no one could break the window, and being bussed in in an armoured coach and having razor wire, I mean Fortress Wapping it was called, it was, it seems hardly imaginable now, but such was the strength of feelings and distrust on both sides. I think the writers were absolutely caught, I mean we all had our different loyalties at the time, but you know both sides were behaving badly, of necessity, and it was totally unpleasant for everybody. It certainly made me think of leaving completely, of giving up my job and doing something else, and some people did, or you gritted your teeth and thought 'well this can't go on forever', as indeed it didn't. But it definitely affected morale, I would say it definitely made writing harder because it sort of poisoned everything and it set up a level of people watching over each other's shoulders and it set up a level of paranoia and defensiveness and insecurity which took an awful long while to go, because everyone was watching each other's backs and wondering which side you were on.

And was that transferred over to your writing, so were you looking at what other people were writing?

No, not that. At one point if you were even delivering copy you'd get a colleague who might be very strongly on one side, saying you know 'I'll remember you broke that picket line and went in'. No email, you had to take your copy in or phone it in and everyone was watching out for everyone else.

But no, the actual writing was not affected other than it was harder to write because you were feeling low morale and feeling rotten all the time.

How would say the political climate of the 1980s, Thatcherism, affected your writing?

I honestly don't think it did at all, no. It affected one's feelings which I suppose then indirectly might affect your writing, but that's a very fine point. But when you've got 250 – 350 words you're so focussed on the event, the music itself, the performers, nothing else comes in. When you're writing to deadline you are so focussed that nothing else comes in really. I don't think it affected me at all. (49m28)

Did you find that there were different concerts available for you to go and review or that there was less available to see?

No, I mean the schedule just went on as ever, you know. The only thing that could have had been thought to have a tangential effect was all this sudden big business being involved in classical music and sponsorship and you know the era of PR and marketing, it was the great decade of PR and marketing. I don't think my critics of the previous generation had anything to do with PR people and marketing, there would be no Press Officer and Publicity Officer and marketing machine. The fact that that was born in the 1980s and was very aggressive in the 1980s made critics talk amongst themselves about the ethics of how, if at all, we were being influenced by those people. Now there was a lot of soul searching because there seemed to be infinite budgets for PR people to take you out for lunch. It was the great era of lunches, you could be invited out for a lunch that lasted from 1pm 'till 4pm and cost £200 and any company, orchestra record company would be delighted to do that to get you on their side. There was quite a lot of soul searching, 'oh yes, you had lunch with the PR officer of EMI did you?' and people would be watching to see if you were giving better reviews to a record by EMI. Critics were watching each other and bitching about each other I think quite a bit about that and you had to square it with your own conscience. Well, is the fact that you've had a long time talking to the PR officer of the LPO having a lovely dinner and getting a free trip, are you going to write more positively about their next concert? I think I can honestly say I didn't, because I always felt that all I had was the concert that evening and how they played that evening. All I can say is that was in the air and we were all very aware of it. There would be quite a lot of bitching amongst each other about who might have been wined and dined by a certain PR Officer, so that is an important ingredient in the 1980s. It really happened, having set up the PR and marketing thing, it's still going and it's still strong, it's not going in that heady way that it was in the 1980s, nobody has the time or the money to go for lunches now. (53m33)

So music media in general, things like CDs, stereos, video recorders, MTV. Did any of that affect your writing?

Not affect my writing. I mean yes of course one was asked to do record columns, and we all did it in different ways.

I noticed that you were doing record reviews, were you asked to do that or was that something that you just started?

I can't remember when it started or exactly how we did it. I think we did a sort of monthly rota, I think I did a column and there'd be about three other people, so you'd do one and then there'd be Paul and Nick and then somebody and then you, and then Paul and Nick and somebody and then you. We had a sort of weekly rota for doing the weekly record round up. I think records were on Saturdays weren't they. We were always shifting them around, and then they were on Fridays and then 'should we have them in the weekend thing or should they be in the main paper?' There was a dispute, there always has been, about actually was it a valid thing to have record reviews in a newspaper or should that only be for a music magazine? I mean there's always been debates about the amount of space given to record reviewing.

Do you know whose idea it was to start doing it?

I can't remember, it all started around the same time as *The Preview* I would say, it was all part of the expansion of the music critic's job from just overnight reviewing pure and simple to a package which was overnight reviewing, feature writing, record reviewing and preview providing. (55m39)

Were there any media developments or anything else that affected you during that period? Were there any specialist classical music magazines that had an impact perhaps on what you wrote, or your Editors' preferences?

I think only in as much as it was a period of expansion so when the *BBC Music Magazine* started and I'm trying to think, well *Gramophone* was always going. It's difficult to say where the sort of interface was. It must have worked by osmosis, I mean things that were being sold to music magazines, artists that were being sold for promotion to music magazines by PR people, Arts Editors that were worth their salt must have read all these magazines and sort of noticed what people were talking about and 'oh gosh there's a cover on Simon Rattle coming up so maybe we should do a feature', I mean there must have been some sort of, but not being on the commissioning side it's difficult for me to comment on that. But yes, and vice versa you know something that the Editor of *Gramophone* spotted by reading the daily papers must have given him an idea. There must have been that symbiosis I would say, yes. I mean one would offer, if you were doing something for one you would offer it for another, that's where it impacted. So if I was getting an interview with Simon Rattle for *Gramophone* or *BBC Music Magazine*, I might say 'look I'm talking to Simon Rattle for that, would you like a piece for *The Times*?', or vice versa, depending on the deadline difference, because being allowed to write for other publications but not other papers you could sometimes do a double up on a commission. (58m21)

So *The Independent*, you've already mentioned it a little bit, but what was your response to the style of criticism adopted by *The Independent*?

Now I'm trying to be absolutely fair you see because it has changed so much. I can almost not remember how it began. Can you remind me?

It started in October 1986.

I can't remember how many music critics they had to begin with. They had a slightly different structure I think, they had a structure of a Music Editor didn't they?

They had a Chief Music Critic and then they used people out in the locations.

I've always had the feeling they had a sort of Music Editor, a Division Editor, which we didn't have we just had the Arts Editor, and I think they had a wider pool of contributors, they certainly do now,. I suppose my general impression, though I'm wary because my memory is not that clear, I think I or we felt that it was slightly more diffuse in *The Independent*, slightly less focussed maybe. Maybe that's unfair, I don't know. I can't remember who was writing then right at the beginning, the first music critics on *The Independent*.

Bayan Northcott was one, but I think they used people from all over the country.

Yes. I suppose the safest thing I could say was that when it was good it was very very good and when it was bad it was horrid. They could have stars writing and first class criticism and then you'd read something and you'd think 'who's that? Where did they get that person from?' It was sort of uneven, that's my memory of it.

But *The Times* did see it as a threat?

Yes, yes absolutely. I mean every department, I would almost say that certain new ideas put forward by *The Times* were in a knee jerk reaction to what *The Independent* was doing. My personal view was that it was a pity we copied so much. We didn't always think of another new, better, different idea from them. We perhaps just thought 'well if *The Independent*'s doing that we must do it to'. Do it better, yes. But yes, I mean almost everything it was a knee jerk reaction and 'oh God', looking over your shoulder at what *The Independent* was doing at the beginning. I don't think we really care so much what they're doing now.

You've said about the increase in features and the increase in photo journalism.

Yes, that was undoubtedly due to *The Independent*. I mean it seems amazing now that nobody had thought of making such a big splash with first class photos, it seems incredible that it took *The Independent* to do that. But it really had a huge effect. Even today, I don't know if you've noticed that on page 3 of *Times 2* we have this great big stunning photo every day with a catching little motto underneath, well you could trace that right back I think to *The Independent*.

I do remember going through the old copies of *The Times* and they were very text based.

Yes, it was a huge revolution, oh yes definitely. Pictures were always subsidiary to the copy and to illustrate the copy. Since then, they've existed in their own right as photo journalism. (1h02m41)

Did you find that with all the changes in print technology that came about from the Wapping Dispute that newspapers were able to create more supplements and colour photos that kind of thing? I don't know if that affected perhaps the amount of space that was made available to you, because you then had extra supplements to write for, to fill out with words?

This is very difficult because I have a hunch that if I take, now I'm taking the whole period and you really want me just to concentrate on that ten years don't you?

Although if there is something in the 1990s I would be interested.

I have a hunch that it stayed much the same all the time. It goes up and down and up and down and sideways to left and to right. You know, we throw up our hands in horror because we suddenly seem to have less space and then the arts gets moved to a different part and we seem to have more space. I mean to be honest I just wonder if all this doesn't just even out in the end because I mean I'm doing about three or four, an average of three reviews a week. Well no, there was a period when, that's twelve a month, no, at the start of my career I could do up to twenty or twenty two/ twenty five reviews a month. The highest number I ever did was probably twenty five a month and it settled to twenty, eighteen, fifteen. Now I cannot remember the point at which it then settled to ten or twelve so that's definitely a decrease isn't it, in the number of reviews a month. But as far as word length is concerned, if anything we have more now. I can remember in the very early 1980s getting 223, they were that specific. Now I can get 450. But if you average it out I would say the average, apart from opera which is always a bit more, for an overnight concert review would be 350 words and I don't think that's changed much from 1981 to 2001, on average. Now when I compare my own, this is very tricky because there's two things here, if I compare my maximum of twenty five to the average now of twelve a month, I don't know if that's because we have more critics writing now. I mean the figure that would be the operative one for you would be how many classical reviews a month, not how many I was doing a month. There was a time when there was probably only two of us or three of us at the most writing. Now there's probably four, how many now, there's Richard, me, Geoff, there's four of us writing now, one would have to check actually how many classical reviews to test this theory of mine that actually not so much has changed. My workload has changed because we have more critics so the butter is spread more thinly. I can remember at a time when people were coming in and I used to feel 'oh gosh, well if he's going to write and he's going to write I'm going to have fewer reviews'. So the bigger the team the fewer reviews I'm going to get. But I don't know if it means, I just wouldn't know, because my impression is, going back to your original question, that yes we get a supplement here, we have T2 or we don't have T2 and the arts pages are within the main paper and at any time it can be 'oh we've suddenly got a lot more space' and then suddenly we've got a lot less space. I've a feeling that the actual space for classical music reviews, is constantly in flux and that there have not been dramatic changes in a long term view. But I might be shocked if you have a database and the statistics might show me that my impression is wrong so I'm a bit cautious, but that's my impression.

During that period 1981 – 1991, how did you perceive your relationship with the readers, were you like a detached expert or were you a consumer guide or a learned friend, how would you describe it?

I think only in opera can you be considered to be a consumer guide really because that's the only thing that's going to go on for more than one performance where you can actually recommend that someone goes or doesn't go. So that's where we differ from a theatre critic I think. I personally have just felt that I wanted to report on what has happened for the sake of those who want to read and know about what happened that night, whether they're people that went who want to check as it were on their own responses or whether they're people living in Cornwall that want to hear 'well how well did Fischer-Dieskau sing at the Queen Elizabeth Hall?' So I've always felt I wanted to give as accurate a picture of what took place that evening and, by the words I chose, to make that as vivid as possible so that someone would actually feel that they'd been at the concert even if they hadn't; and built into that of course is your critical reaction and your judgement. But my first thing would be to provide a service so that even someone in John O'Groats would get a feeling of what that concert had been like, or what that new work had sounded like, and to try and convey it in words even today is still the biggest challenge. (1h10m48)

What about your relationship with the artists themselves?

Well of course that changed enormously when one started doing features and interviews because until then you never met them, well I didn't. But then again everyone's different. But I would certainly never meet an artist before or after their performance, but again with the PR movement growing you were invited to dinners after the performance, I would never go, I would see it as totally irrelevant, I mean all I'm there to do is report on it as from within the audience. But as soon as you start doing a

features interview you meet these people of course. Now there used to be quite a rule that the person that had done the interview prior to the event, because they were always pegged to something, should not review that event. Which was a sort of tacit way of saying that you could be compromised wasn't it, otherwise why not? That rule doesn't (apply) anymore, it's never even thought about. But definitely in the 1980s if you went to interview, who shall I say, Anthony Rolfe Johnson the tenor, ahead of his concert to write a sort of preview feature to interest people in the concert, you would not review that concert. Now it was never said but that implied to me that they thought you could be compromised by it. So that brings up the whole question of, you know, if you've met somebody and enjoyed their company can you bear to give them a stinking review afterwards? Well I'm afraid I do, and did, and you have to do that. You cannot be compromised, you have to still report on it like it is and that can cause enormous hard feeling, and artist can feel betrayed, 'oh but she seemed so nice when we were having the interview'. Well you know, tough, my duty is to the readers and not to the artists and of course it turns agents and managers against you so that if you write a stinking review of someone and then put it round the other way a year later you want to do a feature on them, I can remember times when agents would say 'we're not having that cow Hilary Finch writing about so and so because she tore strips off them'. So there were times when that could be tricky. I mean the best artists and managers do not behave like that I have to say, they're far more professional because they know it doesn't do them any good in the long run. But especially in the 1980s when people were much more sensitive to the pressures of PR and marketing it played into things quite a bit I would say.

That must have been really tough, when that was first happening, features, to find your footing with that way of working?

Yes I suppose, (but) because you interview someone it doesn't mean they become a friend. I suppose I was quite dispassionate about it in a way. I would say, probably only two or three artists in my own life became friends, it didn't necessarily have to be because you'd interviewed them, just through other various means. So virtually it didn't impact but it was very much there and I think different critics would have felt compromised or not in different degrees. It's an entirely personal thing how you handled it, and different Arts Editors would be more or less aware of it too.

So the Arts Editors were more in tune with that element of your work?

Yes they would watch it more I would think, they would think 'well I know Hilary has interviewed that person X many times so maybe I'll give someone else the review to do'.

Quite on the ball then?

Yes, the best ones always kept up. But I personally never found it a problem.

...(Part B) ...

Final question, how would you summarise the changes that occurred in broadsheet music criticism 1981 – 1991, either in general or specifically at *The Times*?

I was thinking on the train this morning, it's a difficult question because the real changes came after that. Nevertheless, let me think, I would say within that ten years and I've been absolutely strict about to keeping to 1991, a move away from a page dense with one-off overnight reviews to a broadening out and an expansion of the critic's job into being also a feature writer, an interviewer, a provider of preview information, which at one point I was expected to do, I wasn't given a choice, and record reviewing. So I would say within that decade the definition of music critic broadened and expanded enormously, and I think for the better. Some people would say this is where prostitution came in that the pure music critic then ceased to exist, you know, because once you start to dirty your hands with all these other things you're not a pure music critic. I would say I would disagree with that and say it doesn't make you a poorer critic. It should, if you handle those things right, expand and enrich your journalistic experience as a music critic. (1h57m06)

Interview with Dave Gelly,
Goldsmith's College, Lewisham, London. 28th March 2006

Part A

The first thing I wanted to ask about was your style of writing. Thinking of the period 1981 to 1991 in particular, I was wondering what factors shaped your style of writing and whether you were actively trying to create something new or whether you absorbed a style that was perhaps already out there?

Well, I didn't actually specifically set out to write anything in a particular style I don't suppose, I mean one reads things you know, but prose is like a window pane, you should be able to see through it and it should be clear. I'm not sure where it comes from, it comes from what you read really I suppose and it may well come from the general sort of flavour of the way people write about a particular topic at that particular time. So it may well be that now if I looked back I'd think 'oh gosh, I wouldn't do that, or I wouldn't have said that, or I wouldn't say that now', but that could well be because of the influence of the way things were written in those days. Last night, when I realised I was coming over here today, I pulled out some of my cuttings. My earliest *Observer* cuttings are from 1984, and they're actually separated. Before that they're in a big box just called cuttings. But I was just looking through it and I was thinking that I don't really think I'm doing anything much different, not in the terms of style, between then and today, although in terms of content there's a lot of difference but we'll come on to that I'm sure.

So you maintained the same style?

I did get an English scholarship at Cambridge, so writing didn't really give me any difficulty.

Did you have to adapt your style of writing to suit the house style?

Nobody ever said anything about that. But, I wasn't employed by *The Observer*, I was a freelance writer. The Arts Editor asked me if I would start writing because of things he'd seen that I'd written elsewhere. So presumably, otherwise they wouldn't have asked me.

So they could see that your style would fit in with house style?

That's right yes.

Did you ever consciously need to make your style, during this decade, more accessible to perhaps a less specialised readership?

I always did write for a less specialised readership. I'm a great believer in writing for a non-specialised readership. It seems to me that in general newspapers you're writing for everybody. People are going to pick it up and read it. I'll always remember a thing that Katherine Whitehorn said and it's very, very relevant in this sense, she said 'I can pick up a newspaper and start reading a column in which I understand what all the individual words mean, but I have not the faintest idea what the person is talking about. I then look at the top and see it says rock and I realise it's not intended for me so I'm not supposed to be able to understand it'. And I thought well yes, absolutely, that's precisely what we try to avoid at all costs. In a conversation I had with the Arts Editor when I started, which was in 1974, he said well generally speaking, you have to think that the sort of people who are going to read an article like this are going to be people who have a particular interest in it on the one hand, but also the vast majority of people are just idly reading those pages anyway and the trick is to write something interesting enough so they'll read it anyway. I think that's what I've tried to do really.

Did that change in any way during that period or was that something else that was fairly consistent?

I think that you begin to appreciate that more people, the audience, probably became more knowledgeable about the whole thing. I mean people said 'who are these Beatles?' people like that, there weren't so many of those around as there were in 1974.

When I built my database I noticed that you covered different genres, rock, pop, jazz, world music, and I wondered if different genres required different styles of writing, and if so did that change during this period?

I tried not to. What you've picked up on is what I was going to say about content. I'm just looking back at 1984 now because that was the one I was looking at yesterday. I tried to do it all the same. I mean what you try and be is like the average intelligent person looking at something, what ever it is, but who knows a bit about it and who tries to explain it. Originally I started writing about popular music and popular music things in general, now when I started in the 1970's that was a very broad

thing. I said 'well can I interpret that as being anything which is popular?' and they said, 'yes of course you can'. Then you discover of course that things that are actually popular are things that nobody thinks about because they are there all the time. In those days, people used to go to firms dances, and things like that and you say well what sort of music gets played at firms dances? and actually what gets played is either pop music of ten years before, or else the sort of things that are relevant to firms dances. And these things were very popular. I remember saying that whatever you think may be the most popular song or tune today, this would have been about 1976, I'm willing to bet that actually the most popular song is Viva Espana because it is sung by anybody at any sort of do, they end up with Viva Espana, things like that interest me, and at the time you could do that. Nobody regarded it as a separate and sacrosanct thing whereby everybody had to be an expert on something. What it is, is that you see an interesting thing and write about it. I remember some time around then I did a thing about Lata Mangeshkar who was actually the most recorded singer in the world, because she was the voice of all Indian films. You hear a woman singing on the soundtrack and it's Lata Mangeshkar. She came to do a concert in Birmingham and thousands of Indian people turned up and I thought well that's the thing to write about, that's popular you know. So I did that. (10m00).

They were perfectly happy with that, in fact, that was the sort of thing that *The Observer* really liked at the time. I think a lot of that has got to do with, the sort of people, well, there were two things. One is that papers were smaller then, and because they were smaller there wasn't quite so much peripheral matter. So if you've got the news, three arts pages, the sports and the literary pages, that's it, it's all in a paper, and so everything's got to be general. Also the people who worked on newspapers in those days in an Editorial capacity tended to be generalist, well informed people, or if they had their specific interest it was just part of what they did. When I started at *The Observer* the Arts Editor was a man called John Lucas, whose special area was opera. There was the Arts Editor and the Literary Editor, these were the two people who were in charge of that part of the paper. The Literary Editor was Terence Kilmartin, the man who translated Proust. These are not inconsiderable people, these are not hacks. And so it was it was good to work with people like that. It was nice to work with nice intelligent people, who just said, 'oh, that's good, that's odd, that looks interesting, have a go'. (12m09)

So did they give you a considerable amount of freedom?

Yes, you used to say 'is it all right if I do so and so?' Very rarely do they say 'I don't think so'. I think that may have happened about twice in those years. I know your period is 81-91, but from the period from the mid 70s to the mid 80s, I forget when it was that John Lucas left, Kilmartin died, but it was around most of the 1980s I think that you could interpret popular as being popular. My particular subject is jazz anyway so I did quite a lot of jazz. But I did a lot of other stuff. I'd do comedians, I'd do things like Christmas shows, the Chas and Dave Christmas Show, that was good fun to do. That's what I thought doing popular music was supposed to be about.

With the Editor giving you this free rein, were they ever, or perhaps were later Editors, very hands-on? Did you find that as the period progressed they were getting more involved or being more prescriptive? They got more hands-on and the reason for that was that popular music got to be a bigger deal. It got to be much more important, culturally, it just got to be a bigger thing.

Do you know when from roughly?

Well you'd think it would be just after the Beatles but it wasn't, it was it was sometime after that punk business. It was a little while after that. And it got so there was a thing which was quite separate, you know, popular music, or pop music or whatever it was, became much more self defining and much bigger. And consequently more people wanted to get involved in it. More people wanted to make money out of it, and there was more money floating about. And what happened was the amount of money knocking about in the pop business just got stupid. So that the amount of advertising available was enormous, the advertising budgets of record companies were big. So they wanted more. In the end they had more and more stuff like that and so consequently more and more people started doing it and then the whole thing got to be an industry on its own. So one person just sitting writing amusing little articles about Chaz and Dave's Christmas show couldn't really make an impression in that context. And I'd say that happened during the course of the 1980s, but I couldn't put an exact date on it, but it gradually unravelled during that period.

So when the Editors did become more interested, were they deciding which artists you should cover?

Not really, they didn't really. They'd sometimes say 'what about this and what about that?' but generally speaking they'd leave it to me. But it got to the point where people were constantly coming,

not just me, they'd be besieged by would-be music journalists coming up to them wanting to do a bit and coming up with ideas. They never had to think about ideas, people were throwing ideas at them all the time.

When *The Observer* started to include popular music, do you remember any feedback or comments from readers or colleagues, do you recall any reactions either positive or negative?

Well it covered popular music before I started, it just increased. Feedback, you'd get letters from fans. I remember that if you said anything rude about someone, you'd get a tremendous mail bag of people complaining. I said that Shirley Bassey sings out of tune and I got myself some fantastic mail. But she does, she sings sharp, she gets above a certain point and she gets sharper and sharper. And I got all these letters, these aggrieved letters.

Did you ever get any feedback from readers saying 'why are you covering popular music in the broadsheets?' or 'this isn't the place for it'?

Well, if it got to anybody, it wouldn't come to me, it would have presumably come to the Editor or somebody. I don't think it ever did, I don't recall it ever having done so. But I think Miles Kington had a little bit of it at *The Times*, about jazz, but I can't really say. I think I remember him telling me once that he had people writing 'you've got this stuff in the Times, and it's the Times' you know. But I don't think it happened to me. But you see *The Observer* had been carrying stuff for a long time. *The Observer* had started covering jazz in the 1950s and popular music, not pop music, not long after that. Jazz was like the Trojan horse, that was the first thing. The history of jazz criticism in *The Observer* went Kingsley Amis, Benny Green, me. With pop music, it was Tony Palmer before me. (18m32)

So that's about the style of writing...

As I say, the style of writing is the way I write. I tend not to be too solemn. If there's one thing I can say, and you can't always do it nowadays, but if possible I try not to be too solemn. I try to put a little bit of lightness in it. You know this is not really world shattering stuff so we might as well be a bit amusing about it if we can.

You said a little bit about who you followed on from, but did you see yourself then as being in a particular tradition of music journalism?

Not necessarily music journalism, well maybe jazz writers had something to do with it. But not just that, but it was the sort of people who were good. I'll tell you who's a good writer, Humphrey Lyttelton, and he has that light style that I always admired, and I still do. He had this wonderfully light touch. And my late friend, Peter Clayton, he was in *The Daily Telegraph*, he was a lovely writer. And people who wrote about cultural things. Michael Frayn used to write things about this and that, I always found lovely. Orwell did, he wrote [some of the first serious essays on popular culture, one of which was called] 'Boys' Weeklies' [about magazines for schoolboys] and all those things you know [It was also Orwell who described good prose as being like a pane of glass]. That's the sort of tradition I would attach myself to, if it's not sounding too self aggrandising. Rather than, I don't have a lot of interest in the *NME* type of thing, it always strikes me as just sort of silly. (21m07)

Thinking about the volumes of writing, first of all do you think there was a hierarchy in terms of which genre would be given the greatest amount of page space or, I don't know if it made a difference, if you appeared at the top, middle or bottom of the page?

Below the fold as they say, below the fold. Well they used to move you about a lot. And pop I think, popular music tended to be tagged on the end of things. What really got the space, when I started, was classical music and opera. That got a lot, and rightly so I suppose, well I don't know about opera. And so there was always a whole team of classical music writers and opera people. They went along with the theatre and the cinema. You know theatre, cinema, concerts and opera. And then after that came the other stuff which included popular music and other things, light entertainment.

You said there were lots of classical and opera people, were they on the staff?

I don't think anybody was staff. I don't think anybody got paid a salary. They may have got paid retainers, which was a thing that never happened to me. I never managed to get to the stage of being on a retainer. There was this thing called the Critics' Circle, which was a very posh and smart affair, which probably met at a gentleman's club I shouldn't wonder. And the Critics' Circle was theatre, opera, classical music. I don't know if they may have had the odd cinema person. I remember somebody [Peter Hepple, of *The Stage*] saying that they were full of it because this guy had been

elected to the Critics' Circle and he was only a general light entertainment writer which he thought was a great thing. I don't suppose it exists any more, it was a bit of a hangover from the fifties I think.

So they were seen as having perhaps higher status?

It was the hierarchy, it only reflected the general view of things. In terms of what was important and what wasn't.

Do you think that changed at all?

It changed yes. It changed because the people changed. It only reflects the people that are in charge of things. It seems like the serious performing arts of today are only the popular arts of the day before. The people grew up and made them important. Because I've been around a long time I remember things going back a long way. The sort of things that people today make a big fuss about were regarded as trivialities when I was a boy. It's the result of what you grew up with, and what you were a fan of when you were young suddenly gets to be important when you are the Arts Editor of a newspaper. (25m48)

Thinking of new genres that emerged, for example rap, world music, which I think suddenly started to get more space...

People started to notice that there was other stuff, but that's because we increasingly began to live in a multi-cultural society. That's why I went and did a review of Lata Mangeshkar in Birmingham. I think that was probably the first piece of world music that was ever in a broadsheet newspaper. I mean I can't imagine anybody else doing anything. It just stuck me as such an interesting thing, because all these Asian people, they've got stuff which is popular with them and she was like the Ella Fitzgerald of India. It's rather interesting that they should do it.

Did you find that maybe as the popular music side of things started to diversify and increase that any of the traditional classical or opera writers started to get elbowed out of the way?

Well yes, the balance between them was certainly changing over the course of that decade. Pop music became so much more dominant. At the same time, the amount of space kept increasing, because the papers got bigger, I mean the papers have got so much bigger.

So maybe the increase in space accommodated the increase in genre coverage?

Well yes it does, yes, except on the whole, pop music got vastly, vastly, vastly more than anything else. And it's just getting more and more and more.

And so with these newly emerging genres, world music, roots music, rap. How did the Editor choose who would cover that, or was it, as you were saying earlier, that you would pick up on it yourself and then propose it to them?

I'd pick it up as an interested onlooker. But they didn't want an interested onlooker after a bit, what they actually wanted was somebody who was inward with it, who was into it, as they say. That's when I said 'look, I can't deal with all this, it's getting ridiculous, I'll just carry on, I'll do the jazz'. Roughly at the same time when that happened, Benny was still supposed to be the jazz critic and he never did anything, so we had this meeting and they said Benny doesn't send us anything, Benny doesn't do anything anymore. So I said 'look, why don't I just do the jazz. I'm sure Benny won't mind, I'm sure he's too busy anyway'. So I phoned Benny and I said 'Benny do you really want to carry on doing this?' and he said 'well no not really'. And that's how it worked out. So I took over doing jazz and I stopped doing other stuff, except every now and again I'd do something popular. There were some things I still did because none of the pop people would, either it was beneath them, or they didn't know about it. For instance I'd often do things about country music. They used to have this big thing at Wembley once a year, and I'd sometimes go and do those, for no other reason than I thought well nobody else is going to do it and also it was an interesting phenomenon, and also you can have a few laughs because sometimes it gets bizarre. (30m00).

So it sounds like you had a pretty free rein on the type of coverage, and so I suppose in a way you were affecting the quantity of different genre coverage?

Yes, but gradually I did less and less of those and I got to be doing more jazz. It's very hard to separate the dates without having paper with you, but gradually it sort of fell away and what I was really doing was jazz mainly. But of course what happened then was a lot of the little things which would come under minor bits of popular music were getting completely ignored so they tried to attach themselves to jazz. So you got people who were basically show singers for instance, but they tried to pretend they were somehow sort of jazz singers so they'd get any sort of coverage at all in the newspapers.

So you were fitting them into genres?

They were trying to fit themselves, because there was nowhere else. So show singers would make a record and nobody would review it, because there was no category. By this time everything was in categories. There was no category for them and I still do get stuff chucked at me which is patently of no relevance. But it's very difficult for these people, it's getting to be a very surface kind of idea of what constitutes anything. If you start making little niches for everything, in the end something is going to be left out because it hasn't got a niche. Or people don't think it's important or people don't want to know about it.

There's one example where it's definitely the case. On the whole if there's one thing people don't like it's the sort thing their mum and dad liked. So for a long time that whole sort of Perry Como, that sort of period thing got completely ignored. And then what happens is the press isn't actually reflecting what really happens at all, it's reflecting what publicity tells them is happening. Because they all write about each other in this incestuous kind of way, whereas with an aging population there are thousands of people who actually like something completely different, millions of people not in the faintest bit interested in all this, and nobody takes any notice. I remember Stacey Kent said to me, Stacey Kent is an American singer, but she's partly resident in Britain, very, very, very popular singer, but what she sings is basically [classic American] songs of the 20s, 30s and 40s, and she said she was amazed when she started singing semi-professionally and she said you'd turn up at what looked like a leisure centre at Welwyn Garden City and she'd think there was going to be nobody there and she'd walk in and there'd be a hall full of people, all around about fifty years old and that was their night out and that's what they wanted, and that's great. And then she realised that it wasn't just there, it was all over the country. And then she discovered it's all over Europe as well. (34m09).

And so I wonder then if the broadsheets didn't cover that music then who else would?

Nobody does. The rallying place used to be Radio 2, but Radio 2 doesn't do that either now. I have conversations with people a lot of the time saying that they feel neglected by everybody really, and with an aging population that seems to me very silly because you've got people still perfectly compos mentis in their 70s and 80s who feel that 'what's all this about?'.

Yes, why just focus on people in their 20s, there's many, many more people around.

The broadsheets won't do anything about it. Even *The Daily Telegraph* doesn't so I mean, it's unlikely that any of the others will. Except to sneer at it. They're very good at sneering.

So they would've covered more general genres back then but perhaps less so now?

Not at all so now. I always used to do the Sinatra concerts. I wanted to go myself anyway, but they were such huge events some of them and you couldn't ignore things like that.

And they wouldn't be in NME or Melody Maker

No, no it wouldn't be in any of those.

Thinking about quantities then. Were pictures increasingly being added to your articles, and if so did that reduce the number of words you were being commissioned to write?

Interesting. I hadn't thought about that. I don't think so. I think they'd look for a good picture and if they did then they'd include it. I didn't notice that it restricted the amount of copy. What they really were interested in was having a good picture. And there was a time, at *The Observer*, where they always wanted to take their own pictures. And I'd say well 'if you call so and so they'll give you the pictures' and they'd say 'no, no, no, if we're going to do a picture we'll send someone to do a picture'. They had to use their own pictures and this went on for quite a long time. And every now and again there'd be one of these great what we'd call hacks beansos, where a whole lot of journalists from newspapers would all be taken to America or somewhere like that, and there'd be a photographer. And I'd say 'a photographer will be going along to do this' and they'd want to know who it is, they'd ask 'it's not Richard Young is it?' and you'd say who it was, but they'd say 'alright, tell him to send us a contact when he gets back and we'll see'. But they weren't too happy, they really wanted their own person. This went on for a quite a long time, it doesn't happen now, they want as many free pictures as they can possibly get. (37m44).

Was this something they were doing to differentiate themselves?

They probably thought it was their own style. They had a number of freelance photographers who took pictures for them and they liked the way they took their pictures, they felt it fitted their style. So like a house style of pictures? Yes

I noticed that there were more and more pictures alongside the articles and the use of colour slightly increased as well.

Colour yes. Well technically you had colour capacity pages and non colour capacity pages. So you used to have colour magazines in colour and the newspapers were in black and white. You couldn't print colour on newspaper machinery, because they just couldn't do it. But during the 1980s the whole thing was refined, it came in with computer technology, and it got to the point when you could print colour like newsprint and if you did that then you could have immediate colour, you wouldn't have to have your colour pictures taken three weeks in advance so you had time to get it all processed. So obviously people wanted to do it when they could do it. So what happened was some of the paper would be all black and white and some of the paper would be in colour. Some of the machinery and some of the paper would take colour and some of it wouldn't. So you'd have colour capacity and non colour capacity so it depended how the pagination worked out what you'd get. It would only take for someone to take out a whole page advertisement and everything would move up one.

So thinking about the types of articles that were published during that period, in my database I have reviews, previews, features, obituaries, (interviews) yes. And then others which seem like combinations of two or more of the above and I couldn't quite decide. Do you think there was any particular type of article that perhaps increased or decreased?

One thing that a lot of people are keen on is the preview interview. So Wynton Marsalis or somebody is coming over to do a tour and so you'd get an interview with him, you'd do it so that it appears in the paper to coincide with the start of the tour or the week before the start of the tour. This is the sort of thing which is standard practice. That's quite popular but it's become a bit of a cliché now, unless they've got something to say it can be just a bit boring. Previews are not that good unless you've got something real to say about it otherwise it's just like a puff, they're all puffs really. But it looks too obviously like a puff. If it's tied to an interview well all right we've got an interview, if it's not tied to anything at all except here comes Charlie Potatoes then it's not going to be very interesting. (42m26)

Do you think the number of previews increased? Perhaps there was an increase in marketing and PR?

They always like things in advance. People who run festivals like that because obviously it gets the numbers up. They like to have previews. But you can't always do that. But as things fragmented it got to be only huge artists, I don't know like Madonna, who would get the previews. But minor figures wouldn't, they'd only get a review. So previews increased only for big mainstream artists? That's my impression yes.

But reviews, did they increase?

I think the 1980s was the period when I gradually stopped doing pop music anyway and just stuck to my little things that I do. So it's my impressions I'm having to think about here. I don't know, it's hard for me to say really. Reviews have always been an absolute staple. There are always live reviews. Live reviews have always been a staple, I think they always will be.

In terms of music obituaries did you notice an increase or were you being asked to write more music obituaries at any point during that period?

One of the things I do now is obituaries for *The Daily Telegraph*. But because *The Daily Telegraph* obituaries are not signed you don't know which ones I write. (45m02)

I noticed *The Times* did that as well, they tended not to name who was writing them.

I think it's not a bad idea. If people know you write obituaries it's not a good thing. They might wonder if you're, you know, particularly if they're getting on a bit. So I don't mind if people know but I don't go around saying I do and I'm glad that they're not signed personally. In *The Observer* very, very little did we do. What happened in *The Observer*, let me think who died over those years. I remember, I was looking at 1984 last night and I noticed that I did write in the little bit I did, they wanted a thing every week and so you had to do something each week, I did an obituary of Machito the Afro-Cuban band leader, the founder of Afro-Cuban music. Machito died in 1984 and Count Basie died in 1984, and Machito died a week later. And everybody noticed Count Basie and nobody noticed Machito. And so I wrote this thing about Machito saying he was the equivalent of Count Basie in Afro-Cuban music. That was my choice to do it but they didn't mind.

So the paper wasn't pushing you to write more?

No they weren't pushing. Now Dizzy Gillespie died and I'd been told that we'd only got, it may not be exactly in your period but it's not far out of it. I was actually in the office and they said 'look, we've only got so much space so just put a little bit on the end'. I said alright and I started doing that,

and the Editor of the whole paper just happened to come past and he said 'hello, what's up?', and I said 'I'm trying to squeeze Dizzy Gillespie's death into this tiny space', and he said 'what do you mean you're trying to squeeze it in?', I said 'well they've told me I've only got so much space'. He said it was ridiculous and created a big fuss and because he was the Editor they just let me do it. He said 'you can't squeeze Dizzy Gillespie's death into 100 words. Just let the man do it'. But that didn't very often happen. He knew it was important, but what they wanted was a nice neat page, they'd already got it planned out and they didn't want to change it.

I have a question which relates to rock criticism but you might want to think about it in terms of music journalism generally. There's a book by Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write*, and in his introduction he suggests that there was a golden age of rock criticism which ended in the 1980s, do you think there was such a golden age and if so when do you think it ended?

No I don't think so. I shouldn't think so. No I don't think so.

Would you say that the quality of music journalism has declined or improved since the 80s, say from 1980 onwards? Do you think there's been a significant change?

I don't read a lot of pop music criticism. I don't read any really. I really couldn't say. There aren't very many people that write about popular music, whose writing I really admire, and those that are tend to be specialists at something, they tend to be specialists of country music, or big bands or something, and they tend to be just good at it. I don't read a lot about pop music.

And that was the same back in the 80s?

When I was doing things about pop music it was because they stuck out from the norm, either that or they were so hugely popular, such big names. One of the things, and I was looking at 1984 yesterday, was Bob Dylan at Wembley. When you come to think of the extraordinary disunity of scale between a man with an acoustic guitar and Wembley Stadium, there's something comic about it before you even start. And that's the point I started from. But apart from that I don't really know. (50m55).

So the people you do admire are specialists?

Some of them, some can be unbelievably boring.

Would you say the current state of music journalism is depressingly bad or the best it's ever been?

I couldn't really say, I don't read music journalism. I don't read it so I can't have a view or not, it doesn't really interest me.

You've talked a little bit about music advertising already, but did you notice a significant change in music advertising between 1981 and 1991?

It takes up a lot more room. You asked about whether pictures began to squeeze out copy, well I never noticed that. But certainly advertising started to squeeze out everything so if you had a limited amount of space and somebody took a half page advert, out went that weeks work. That happened more than once.

Was it worse then than it is now?

I think it probably happens all the time. The back page of *The Observer Review* this week is entirely taken up with a PlayStation ad. That's this week. Now what went out was the entire listings for that week, because they had that number of pages, so the listings went that week, to which I'd contributed a certain number of little bits. We now wait to see whether we get paid or not.

So would you say that trend started during the 80s?

I think it was always there, but I think it definitely increased during the 80s because popular music got to be a bigger deal and there was more money to be made, more money washing about. Although actually, I would have thought really that the 1970s was the period, the late 60s and though the 70s, when there was a real lot of money kicking about in music. I think the industry probably got bigger, I don't know. I really couldn't say. My impression was that there was a lot more advertising but I may be wrong. I mean *The Observer* started a whole music magazine, which was actually a pop music magazine which comes out once every month and that's advertising driven. I mean you don't start a thing like that unless you're going to get advertising to pay for it. So that speaks for itself.

So it was affecting you then because you might see your work disappear from the page?

Yes, forever have. Well not forever, but it did happen. It doesn't happen quite so much now, but like I say last week we lost the last page. (54m47)

The next thing I'm interested in is the Wapping Dispute and how that affected your writing directly, if at all?

Not so much the Wapping Dispute itself but that whole business of the new technology obviously affected everybody. The effect of it was more pronounced because the change had been held back. What had been happening was, all of these innovations had been going on in other forms of publishing without anybody asking any questions. But particularly in newspapers a lot of these changes had been held back by the print unions and so when the dam burst the changes were cataclysmic. From a practical point of view, the changes that took place in the period in which I had anything to do with newspapers at all, let's say from the mid 70s, it used to be that you would write what you wrote on a typewriter and sometimes people would do it in the office if it had to be done quickly, otherwise you'd do it at home and take it to the office. You wouldn't have time to post it just in case. Many is the time that I have driven from Dulwich up to Blackfriars which was where the *The Observer* offices were, and shove stuff in the night box at 2am in the morning. That is then on a piece of paper and then the Arts Editor edits the copy if he needs to, marks it up, it then goes down to the typesetters who'd then copy it onto a Linotype machine and out of that shoots a galley-proof which is basically that on a long piece of paper which then goes back to be marked and corrected and then has to go back down for the corrections to be added, and then it has to be put into the page, which was called a form, which was like a hollow table into which the lines of type were put and locked. Now anytime anything was moved it had to be moved by a messenger, so the Arts Editor couldn't go and hand it to somebody, he had to send for a messenger to go and take it. Now all these things were unbelievably slow and cumbersome and then suddenly when the dam burst, what you type, the term that was used was single keystroke, that means what you type appears on the page, goes through various other people looking at it and fiddling with it, but basically nobody sits down and types it all out again. Then of course, you got computers and you can send it by computer through a modem, and so over the years it got to the point when you'd sit at home and you'd send it and it's done and you don't see it again until the paper arrives. (59m19)

So no more driving across London at 2 in the morning?

No more driving, no more messengers, no more nonsense, no more galley-proofs coming in the special delivery, and 'can you do something with this?' None of that, that all went.

You must have been pleased?

It was much easier yes. It happened over a period. There was a period when you used to fax the stuff and then they would put it under a scanner and use that. There were all sorts of intermediate stages until you get to the stage that we've got now.

So of all the things that came out of the Wapping Dispute that was the thing that affected you most?

Well you noticed it tremendously. The thing I noticed most of all was when *The Observer* moved offices which happened at the time when it brought in its computer based technology. It moved offices to Chelsea Bridge House, which is on the Battersea side of Chelsea Bridge. And when you went in there the thing you noticed was it was quiet. Newspapers used to be unbelievably noisy because of people banging typewriters, [and from the print works underneath it, which, in the old days, were always housed in the basement] it was a noisy place. And you went into this place and it was carpeted and the computer terminals had soft keys and you couldn't hear anything. It took a fortnight for the journalists to reduce this pristine surrounding into absolute chaos, an absolute tip, paper and old cups, but it was quiet.

If you weren't having to drive across London at 2am in the morning was it giving you more time to put your articles together?

I honestly can't remember now, I sometimes used to do that it, it was probably my choice to do it. I probably could have gone and done it in the paper earlier. I really can't remember exactly what we did. Friday morning was the absolute last minute that things could go and I very often used to take stuff in on Friday morning and there would be Clive James doing the television thing for the last week, he'd gone in early because he had to get it done.

What about the political climate, I'm thinking of Thatcherism, did that affect your writing in any way?

No it didn't, not me, it may have affected other people but it didn't affect me. It probably affected the art that you were writing about a bit. I wasn't writing about pop music then. Was it 79? Yes it was, so through the 80s. No I didn't really notice much to tell you the truth. I mean not from that point of view, you noticed plenty of change in society generally and economic changes but no it was the technological changes which were of course a result of that political climate.

What about any other media changes at that time, MTV coming along, stereo, compact discs, did that affect what you wrote or how you wrote in any way?

Compact discs were an interesting thing. With any form of popular music and popular culture it goes in generations as people say. What happens is, this is popular now, you then get up to twenty years when it's not popular and then suddenly up they come again. Kids have grown up and here we go. So when one of those coincided with a change of technology, i.e. from vinyl to CD, it was a bonanza for the industry, because they could just put out everything all over again on CD so you've got a whole lot of that sort of thing, and although it's got nothing to do with the paper, I also used to do quite a lot of broadcasting and quite a lot of things which basically derived from the fact that all this stuff is now available again on CD. (1h05m19)

I seem to recall that Jazz FM started around that time and there seems to have been something of a rebirth of jazz? I know a new jazz magazine came out and I wondered if that changed the emphasis of your writing or were you being asked to provide more jazz coverage?

There was a sudden great burst and everybody suddenly discovered jazz in 1986. *The Observer* actually had a jazz magazine. It started out called *Jazz FM*, because they had some sort of connection with Jazz FM but they fell out with Jazz FM so they just called themselves *Jazz Magazine*. It was actually published by *The Observer*. They asked me if I wanted to edit it and I said no. I said if you'd asked me 20 years ago I'd have said yes but not now. But it was edited by a friend of mine, called Tony Russell, and I was doing a lot for it, and it was a good magazine, and it came out every month. It went on for quite a long time and finally *The Observer* sold it to a Dutch company which was a rocky, dodgy company and it went down the tubes quite quickly after that. But it was a good magazine, because it was edited by a good guy, Tony Russell, who is a really excellent journalist and Editor. I can't tell you the exact dates that it ran from. And they had this curious thing, they never put a date on the front of the paper, they'd only just put the issue number, and so and when you go back years later you have to try and work out when it was from by looking at the internal evidence. There was an interest, and it kept me busy. Lots of it was just gas really and just nonsense but there were a few good people. What happened was a lot of young black musicians appeared which was quite exciting from that point of view, people thought this is different, and of course immediately what they did was think we've got all these wonderful new black musicians which means the old white musicians are no good. So I spent half my time making an inordinate fuss about old white musicians to try and counter some of this nonsense. (1h08m53)

In terms of newly emerging publications, like *Q* magazine, *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*, the *Modern Review* and *The Face*, how did the emergence of those publications influence you as a broadsheet writer if at all?

Not with regards to what I was doing for *The Observer*, but *The Observer* was only one of the things I was doing. For instance I wrote about other things. I wrote some other stuff in *The Independent* which wasn't about music. I wrote about the Olympics in the 80s, I wrote a thing about national anthems for *The Independent* and I did a thing about, my son at the time was about twelve and he got absolutely besotted with Dungeons and Dragons and he used to go down to Chislehurst Caves to do all this, and I wrote a thing in *The Independent* about it, it was a Saturday feature in *The Independent*.

So was that the kind of thing you could do in *The Independent* but maybe not *The Observer*?

Well I said to *The Independent* 'can I do it?' and they said 'yes'. *The Observer* couldn't stop me doing it. I did go to *The Observer* at one point and say 'it's the anniversary of the Goon Show and I was thinking about having a word with *The Independent* about it', and they said 'alright do it for us instead', I said all right, and of course I'd rather do it *The Observer* any way. But knowing the way they um'd and ah'd about things I thought if I did it that was round, you know.

So when *The Independent* came to market did you notice a change in *The Observer* in the way it presented itself, its coverage?

I'm not really sharp on things like that. I didn't see all the papers. Some people look through all the papers avidly and I don't. But we started taking *The Independent* at that time and I used to compare it with the other things but, what it meant was there was just more space. I mean more people were writing about these topics because there was another paper. But I didn't notice any difference.

So you didn't have *The Observer* phoning you saying *The Independent* has started doing XYZ and we need you to do it so that we can keep up?

I find it difficult to separate between what they suggested and what I would have suggested, because I'm normally ahead of them. So I'd say 'watch out, so and so is coming' and they'd say 'right OK',

because that's what you're there for isn't it. So I remember I did the first interview with Courtney Pine and I said 'there's this guy called Courtney Pine, he's a nice guy' and I said 'You want to watch out, you're going to hear about him before long'. They said 'oh, really', so I said 'yes, I think I'll do an interview'. So I did, and I had to phone his mum, he was still living at home, he was very young. But anyway, so you'd try and be sort of there before them really. If they'd noticed it, it had probably already happened so you shouldn't be there. (1h14m00)

What about Q magazine? Because the impression I get is that it set itself apart from NME and Melody Maker, and was trying to appeal to a broader audience and less specialist readership.

I don't know I never read it, sorry.

Back in the 80s, did you consider writing for the broadsheets to be a better or worse position than writing for the specialist music press and why?

Broadsheets are always good to write for because you've got a general audience for one thing, you've got more readers for another and people know who you are for a third. At the same time if you want to do anything in any kind of depth or you want to do something which is a little bit out of the swim of the moment then the only place you can do it is in the specialist press, because that's not what the mainstream press are there for. I still do write for a [bi-monthly] specialist magazine [Jazz Review] sometimes.

So how was it different then writing for ...

Because you're writing for people who have a background in it, so you don't have to explain everything. You can make the odd in joke because you assume they've heard of whoever it is. But you've got to be careful because sometimes you can surprise them. You've got to be very careful about that because maybe they don't know. (1h16m00)

So would you use more specialist musical terminology?

I'm always careful about that. I do use a certain amount of musical terminology when I write for the jazz press, but I'm always careful to cover it with some sort of explanation so people who don't have any technical musical knowledge don't feel left out. I think that's the thing you have to do. So people don't feel that you're leaving them out by talking esoterically. (1h16m50)

And this was the same back in the 80s? So you would use a different style?

There wasn't really a difference. You can make a few assumptions that you couldn't make if you were writing for a general audience, but that's obvious. But you wouldn't write assuming that everyone knows everything because that's asking for trouble and it wouldn't be nice writing.

So in terms of your relationship with readers, again in the broadsheets, how did you perceive your relationship with them? For example did you see yourself as a learned friend or a detached expert passing on your expert knowledge. What was your relationship with them?

It's interesting that, because the people who write to you are the people who know about it. So if you only went by correspondence you'd think that you're entire readership were considerable experts in whatever it was. But just as someone who knows a bit about it and can explain things and point things out without being pompous and silly about it and without being too heavy about it all. *The Observer* has started an interesting thing now in the last few months, since it went Berliner, since it's changed size, which is called Email The Experts and it's interesting because they ask very basic things. And if they had emails back in the 80s you'd have still got the same sort of letters then. It's things like, the last one I got two weeks ago, somebody had been to see *Goodnight and Goodluck*, and said 'I thought the jazz score was absolutely terrific and I wondered if there are any other good films which have jazz scores in them?' You know simple things like that, and so you write back saying you might want to see this or that, it has a great score in it. So about 150 words of handy suggestions and then you get letters coming in saying 'but what about this and what about that?'

So as someone who knows a bit about it and can point things out.

Yes, interesting things. I'm trying to get people interested, not put people off. Bad writing puts people off, good writing makes people interested. You can say that I think without shocking anybody. (1h20m09)

So what about your relationship with the artists themselves and the music industry, how did you see your relationship with them?

I've always got on well with performers. My background in music is as a musician, so I know people from that point of view. Secondly I'm not the sort of person who hangs around dressing rooms, I just don't do that. But I'm quite happy to talk to people and I tend to get on with people. But I think it's a question of the way you approach it really, more than anything else. I had a conversation with Wynton Marsalis once and he said 'you wouldn't believe some of the people that have been in here today'. I said 'what do you mean', he said, 'they come in here as though they're trying to start an argument so they can win it'. I said 'I'm not interested in arguing, what are they doing coming in here to argue?' That's when somebody comes in and they're booked in for a series of interviews in a hotel room. I have in the past seen quite a few musicians. I always get on well with jazz musicians, because I am one, and we don't get silly with it. But I've got on with pop people as well. In the 80s when I was doing quite a bit of this sort of thing I did the press pack for one of Bowie's albums and I found him fine, mind you I had known him before, and Charlie Watts, I knew him before as well. I get on fine with them. (1h22m51)

Did you see it as part of your role to promote their music? There must have been times when you didn't promote someone's music?

If I really dislike something or I really don't think it's any good I try and avoid it. There are people who just love to steam in and score points and I very rarely do. With concert reviews, you don't know what you're going to get, and sometimes it's absolutely awful or absolutely appalling and you think how can people possibly like this? So you end up just writing a riot of jokes about it and send them up. But I tend not to do that, because if it's something you know is going to be, then you don't. The only thing about that is, and that doesn't happen very often, if it's somebody that everyone makes a fuss about and you just can't see the point of, then it's very difficult.

So did you act as a sort of feedback mechanism between the artists and the readers?

I don't think so.

So it sounds like you're saying that you go along and hear something see something and you're communicating what you've seen?

Yes, so you just say this is what he does. I don't think I ever would want to interview somebody who I really thought was a complete waste of time. It would be very difficult to do that because you'd be pretending to a friend when you weren't and that wouldn't be right.

Not that it is a matter of sides, but if I asked whose side were you really on, was it the readers, the Editors, the music industry or the artists, because you have a difficult job trying to balance all of those?

You're trying to interpret what the artists are doing for the benefit of the readers. That's what you're really supposed to be doing. If in the course of it somebody comes a cropper well that's unfortunate. But on the whole that's what you're doing, you're trying to say look this is what he's doing or at least that's what he was doing on Tuesday night, and so on. And very often, this is what happens in jazz anyway, there's people they've heard on records and they want to know what they were like when you hear them in person, and so they'd get another angle on it then. And the ambience and the feel of the whole thing you know.

... (Part B) ...

So we've looked at qualitative changes and styles of writing, volumes and quantities, music advertising, Wapping dispute, Thatcherism, media changes, the newly emerging press we touched upon, your relationship with readers and the music business. Then we've gone on to talk about recruitment, reward, training and development, and internal relationships particularly conflict. I just wondered if there's anything you think I've missed or that I should have asked about?

Well regularity of contributions is one thing. It tends to vary over the years, and because I've been there a long time I've noticed it. But other people might not have noticed because it's a thing that moves slowly. It used to be very irregular to begin with. You'd phone up and say 'how about so and so?' and they'd say 'I don't think we're going to be able to do it because there's not enough room' or they'd um and ah and then say yes, and it was always a bit of a lottery. And then there was a big change, and it was under Nicholas Wapshot, when he said he wanted something from each of the constituent parts of the arts pages every week. That probably came in around 1984. I can't be absolutely certain and it may be a little bit later but it was in the 80s no doubt about that. And he also changed the typeface into that, I thought it was very old fashioned, rather like 70s, all that curvy stuff.

If you look back, you'll see that all of a sudden the typeface for the headlines was all sort of curvy it wasn't square like Times Roman, I forget what the typeface is, and that was all to distinguish the arts pages. And then after that, he wanted something every week, but it wasn't very long but it was something, so that kept you busy. Then after that it briefly reverted to quite a sensible thing where you sorted out at the beginning of the month what you were going to do during the course of that month. I mean that couldn't last and it didn't last, because the woman, Lucy something, she was only there for a short while and then she left to go and work somewhere else. And after that it settled down to regular, I started doing regular record reviews, and the after that a CD reviews column every week and occasional other things, sometimes they were quite big things and sometimes just little bits. And that's really what continues really to this day. So it's gone from being occasional to be absolutely must have something every week. To being not weekly necessarily but at least we knew where we were, to being a regular review column with occasional features as and when. And that's up to the end of the period that you're dealing with which is up until 91. I think, it was roughly around that time, around 91, that we settled for having the CD reviews or record reviews as a separate item from the other things. So that's always there and then you put these other things in with it. Before that, it was just a question of having a little bit of room and they'd shove a little record review in. I can see why because you could make them very short and tuck them in. But it's not a very good service to the reader.

Another thing. With records and CDs, in recent times, newspapers have made alliances with mail order houses. If you look in the newspaper at the bottom of the column, very often, or maybe sometimes at the top of a page, somewhere in a panel it will say for any priced CD or book, or whatever it is, on this page call this number. They have a deal with a mail order house which provides, all in with post and packing at a price, anything reviewed in the paper. The one *The Observer* uses is in Rochester, it's called NMP. And I think all the papers now do it. So if you're dealing in a fairly esoteric area, such as I do at the moment with jazz, you have to really provide them with the name of the distributor of the material otherwise they have difficult in finding it. But it's a good thing because what used to happen was you used to get these irate people writing letters and phoning up saying 'I read your review and I went to my local record shop and they say it doesn't exist, kindly amend'. Well the record shop doesn't know and as the amount of material increases so it got more and more difficult, now at least when the thing is reviewed they can get it on mail order through the paper. Of course it doesn't do any good to the local shops which are closing. You don't see record shops now. (2h21m08)

That's a development that's occurred in the last, well less than ten years, and it's outside your period. But that was on its way because the sheer volume of material was increasing all the time during the 1980s and it was getting more and more difficult for stores to stock it and the variety of outlets was such, I mean, once upon a time there were about six record companies and they all had their own distribution. Then there were a lot of record companies but there were about six independent distributors. Now it's got the point when there are still a lot of independent distributors, some of them quite small, you know warehouse stuff for very small labels, and how do these people find them? They go into the record shop and ask for whatever it is and they don't even know where to start looking. And the databases aren't complete and they're never up to date. So in that sense it's very useful to us where they have a tie up with a mail order company.

Do you have to check before you write a review that the mail order company can get hold of it?

No I don't have to check that. But what I always do, out of the goodness of my heart, is make sure I know who the distributor is.

So you wouldn't think 'I can't write that piece because the mail order company can't get hold of it'?

No because if the worst comes to the worst I put them onto the actual record label themselves. It's a question of who keeps all these physical things? And now with downloads we don't know what's going to happen. It may well be for a lot of things we may not need a physical object. Someone was telling me that often the quality isn't very good on downloads because it doesn't have the full frequency range when it's transmitted and sometimes it can be quite disappointing.

I remember when I built my database, I think particularly in the Sunday magazines, there were lots of adverts for music clubs, like Britannia. But I don't think they were tied in then?

I don't know. But the other thing is that very often newspapers along with their mail order company do promotions and have their own things, get your Fred Astaire favourites or something like that which they source through the music club. They're usually older things, well I don't know, we take *The Daily Telegraph* at home which tends to be for people our age. It's fascinating, you'd think that

everybody in the world who ever wanted a Glenn Miller record must have it by now. But no they are still selling them. It must be the same with all those other things, like Engelebert Humperdinck. There must be a limit to the number of people who want these things.

And then I suppose there's different variations, compilations, between different years, or the best of?
That's right, they'll give it a different title but it'll be the same stuff recycled. (2h26m)

Note

[] Indicates text added after the transcription was reviewed by the interviewee.

Interview with Edward Greenfield by Stephen Moss
14th August 2001 at Edward Greenfield's home

Source: Newsroom, Guardian and Observer Archive and Visitor Centre, Oral History Project, OHP/27/1

OHP/ 27/1/a – Disc 1, Track 1:

(0m35) So Ted, tell me how you came to join *The Guardian*?

I went to the appointments board on the 6th January 1952...I had no idea of becoming a journalist, I'd written the reports of union debates at the Cambridge Union over two years of my three at Cambridge...and I'd always harboured the idea that I'd love to be a record critic, love to be a music critic...and therefore I was advised, when I went to see Reuters, and they felt I would be more suited to a domestic post, to write to various newspaper Editors. I wrote to the Editors of *The Yorkshire Post*, *The Birmingham Post* and *The Guardian*. (1m55)

(2m13)...I'd never read *The Guardian* because it had a nasty gothic masthead and advertisements on the front page, very off-putting indeed. And then I read in *The New Statesman* that they were having news on the front page, and the moment I looked at it I thought 'this is my paper for life', it was just one of those revelations. So I sent off my three letters and got a very long handwritten letter from Sir Linton Andrews in Leeds explaining why in a busy office like Leeds they couldn't have a beginner you see, very kind, very nice, and a rather ungrammatical one from the Editor of *The Birmingham Post* saying 'no'...A.P Wadsworth said 'I can't say we have anything at the moment, but you might send me some of your stuff, yours sincerely A.P Wadsworth'. So I sent him some of my stuff. Some of your Cambridge University...? Yes, both music and, I did one or two music reviews, and some of my union reports, and so he said that I ought to come and see him some time...and I went to see him...arrived far too early... You hadn't arranged a time? No, he just told me to come you see. I finally saw him about 5, 5.30...it was great fun talking to Waddy, he was such a sparkly sort of person, I loved him very dearly...and then he made me see John Anderson, who was the absolute opposite, who was very fey and offhand...he was Second Deputy Editor...so one was rather depressed by then...So he went back and saw Wadsworth and he said 'we'd better have you'.....On that day? ...On that day... On what basis? I didn't care...(5m11) He said 'well what do you want to do?' And I said 'well I wanted to be a record critic' and he said 'well that's not a job'. So for the first year and three quarters I was a sort of personal assistant on the corridor. The grandest thing I ever did was short leaders and occasional reports and things, obituaries I did...(5m36).

(16m08) I've always gone on the principle that the role of the music critic is to aid enjoyment rather than act as a barrier against enjoyment. Do you think you can almost have too much knowledge to be a critic? I don't think that, but I think if you approach it from the point of view of a performer that you are liable to concentrate on the technicalities too much rather than the broad brush and probably to be hyper-critical and not to be as appreciative as you can. I can see the thing has faults but you have to put them in perspective, what goes right with the performance interests me far more than what goes wrong. OK, so you need occasionally, when you are angry, to express it. I can be as beastly as anyone when I really feel they've offended...

When I left *The Guardian*, the day before my birthday in 1993...(18m)

At Cambridge you wrote some music criticism? Some, for the student paper, and one or two things for *The Cambridge Review*...just the reports for the Union Debates...It was much more a sketch than it was a report (18m55) And that's what you sent to Wadsworth? Some of it, yes. And was it those cuts that got you the job at the paper? (19m04) I suspect it was that he just liked me and I liked him. It was a sort of chemistry, and that I had enough initial talent to be developed into something, whatever it was. (19m20)

(23m16) Give us the structure of your day again. ...3.30pm, that sort of time, then through to midnight. When would the first edition go? About 10. (23m25)

(30m45) ...‘You ought to get your name on this’...so the idea of having my name on it like Philip Cardus or Philip Hope-Wallace was absolutely wonderful, so I went into the office and said to Paddy Monkhouse, who was Acting Editor at the time, ‘Waddy says I ought to have my name on my record column’ (31m20).

(33m44) Long before I stopped being Lobby Correspondent in (19)64, I was much better known for writing on music, and then Colin Mason left the paper and went over to *The Telegraph* and so I immediately jumped and applied to be his successor...I would ring him (Cardus) on a Thursday morning and I’d say ‘Neville, what do you want me to do next week?’. But he was always frustrated that he didn’t have opera, because Philip Hope-Wallace had the opera, and Wadsworth had very sharply decided in favour of Hope-Wallace rather than Cardus when Cardus came back from Australia you see, which miffed Cardus very much indeed (34m55).

OHP/ 27/1/b – Disc 2, Track 1:

(7m32) How did you come to be music critic? You gave up politics in (19)64?

...From (19)54 I was the record critic and that led to quite a lot of broadcasting, it led to my writing on records for *Gramophone* which is the leading record magazine in the world for that matter...but by (19)64 I was much more a music journalist...So a natural progression? A natural progression from my point of view. I think Heatherington was reluctant to let me do it because one or two of the MPs for example thought it was a demotion – no it wasn’t, because it was exactly what I wanted, because earlier on Andrew Porter had wanted an assistant on *The Financial Times*, I was quite close to Andrew at that time, he was the Principal Critic of *The Financial Times* which very surprisingly had the best arts page, or the most comprehensive arts page in London, and Andrew wanted an assistant. And I said ‘well would it be possible if I could reverse my roles and come from being Second Political Correspondent and Music Critic, to be Second Music Critic to Andrew and then do a bit of politics on the side?’, and they said ‘oh no, that wasn’t possible’. (9m34)

Who did you succeed in (19)64?

Colin Mason...very much a scholar music critic.

(11m03) So when you became music critic what were your priorities? What was your manifesto as it were?

I was a terribly loyal number two you see, both to Francis Boyd, perhaps it shows a limitation in me...the last thing I would have done was to try to undermine Francis Boyd’s position even though I saw his weaknesses. (11m32)

(32m44) Was there some ethos at the paper that turned against classical music at some time, because you said that space suddenly started to contract in the late 1980s? I fear so. What was happening there, what was driving that? Well I don’t want to blame an individual but I suspect it was the ethos engendered by an Editor who thought that film was the most important art form, Peter. I’m very fond of Peter...but let’s face it, he’s never liked the real art forms, and film for him was the prime art form.

(33m44) When did you detect that times were getting harder, because you had a pretty clear run in the 1970s, most things were done overnight weren’t they? We were always limited, and sometimes things got in and sometimes they didn’t, and sometimes they were mauled terribly and sometimes they weren’t...it was always a struggle from (19)64 onwards to get things in. I always felt it a struggle. But it got worse and worse really, it was just a gradual development. And indeed you see I was one of the first to argue that you have to justify a music notice of a concert, how do you do that? Because you cannot justify it on the grounds that it was written for the people that were there, maybe three hundred, three thousand at most. You have to justify it, I’ve always said, you’ve got to make it relevant to people who aren’t music lovers, and therefore bring them in. (34m56).

(35m28) ...and I used to argue this even in the 1950s ...the justification of an opera review is clear, you’re giving advice, the justification of a record review is clear, you’re giving advice, but for a concert review...that’s been and gone, you’ve got to justify it in different terms and yet this was unquestioned I think, generally, until the late 1980s and then they all woke up to the same thing which I’d been saying thirty years before. (36m07).

But that was the period when overnight reviewing stopped? Yes. Was something lost when overnight reviewing stopped? Yes, but a lot is gained by having it a day late I think, and best of all I think the present system is much the best, that you've got reviews on a live news page...but I think this is so much better than anything else. In the broadsheet papers? In the broadsheet paper, and that was a big, good development. (36m43) And I didn't like it at first but I've been won around completely... You must've spent the whole of the 1970s and 1980s in the concert hall? And the opera house, yes. Well I suppose so. That didn't drive you crazy being out every night and having to write there and then on the evening? No, no, I loved it... You'd phone it through? No, I'd go in and tap it out generally First on typewriters then on... I had a car to go from Festival Hall and Covent Garden. Did you have a chance to look at the proof? No, no, no. If you had twenty minutes to write three or four hundred words that was it. No more editions? That was the last edition? Yes. Did you dare to read it the next morning? Sort of yes...it had to be in by 10.45 usually, then 11. (37m7)

(43m28) How did the paper's coverage of classical music change in your thirty year stint as Chief Music Critic? Well I think... the coverage of concerts went down, but gradually. So you just realise you were up against it, therefore I would not put down so many concerts on my list, being a compliant person rather than a revolutionary and me wanting to do what the paper wanted me to do rather than what I wanted to do...but what did worry me, and to a degree still worries me, is that I was able to offer what I thought were really rather good profiles of people, exclusive profiles, and mine would not be cut down, and now of course increasingly you see profiles which are two or three times too long...but my joke is, when I look through what the coverage is in G2, I certainly don't know who's writing them but I don't know who they're writing about, I mean who the hell are these people and why should they have four thousand words? And increasingly that happened and replaced the sort of people that I thought were important and the sort of people I could write about with an insight and the friendship and the knowledge which would've been important to the paper. (45m23)

There are a lot of hungry critics out there. Yes, I don't know if they hovered around *The Guardian* that much because *The Guardian* paid so badly anyway.

When I joined there were an enormous number of music critics, you were Chief Music Critic, there was Gerald Larner. In Manchester, we had a very amicable relationship of dividing. There was Meirion Bowen, David Nice (46m43)

(46m55) But that early (19)90s period, there was a real cull wasn't there, Gerald left and went to *The Times*...?

(52m38) Do you detect any of the dreaded dumbing-down of coverage, classical music coverage? No, the dumbing-down was in the mid (19)90s, mid to late (19)90s, and now with the open reviews page it's a great deal better (53m54). So we've come through that period? And indeed there was a dumbing-down of the record column but now generally it's a bit better. Dumbing-down in terms of volume? The length. Not in terms of the nature of the coverage? Well I always did prefer it, my old system of having a co-joined piece rather than these tiny snippets, which don't, sometimes you can dismiss or cover something in two or three lines quite adequately, now you have to do the regulation one hundred words on everything (53m37). I liked the idea of having a piece that was a think piece in miniature, that you had a theme for your coverage of a certain group of new records. (54m20)

Chris Driver, Philip Hope-Wallace, Cardus, John Rosselli... (54m38) They had a certain intellectual credibility...do you think something has been lost in journalistic terms? Oh dear, as you gather I don't want to, I'm not a 'things are going to the dogs' sort of person, and I would hope that some of them do develop into great characters, certainly the quality of the writing is as exciting as it ever was. (55m04)

And what about music criticism, not just at *The Guardian*, but across the board, has that held up? I suppose so, yes. I think so, it's difficult to say. I hope that I was the beginning of a new wave of the record oriented music critics. (55m33)

(60m) He (Peter) let you get on with it basically, he didn't phone up and say why aren't you writing about so and so? Oh no, no, no.

(60m39) In forty years as a staff man on *The Guardian* I never had a comment on anything I did, or very little indeed, which is both good but mainly discouraging in the sense that you would like a little encouragement sometimes. (60m45)... The best I would get would be from Mike (surname unclear on recording) 'Oh it was a good read' or something like that and you think 'well I hope it was a bit better than a good read, Oh dear!'. (61m34)

Interview with Paul Griffiths
Conducted by Telephone. 18th October 2006

Part A

I understand that you were Chief Music Critic at *The Times* during the period 1982 – 1992, is that right? (0m55s)

That's right, yes.

So when did you actually start writing for *The Times*?

I started as a freelance, sometime in the first half of the 1970s, probably about 1972/1973.

So what factors actually shaped your style and approach to music criticism at *The Times* during the period 1981 – 1991? (1m32)

It's really impossible to generalise because each concert or each performance was a different. I suppose, like everybody else, I tried to avoid falling into a routine, so I can't say each thing followed an approach because I tried to make my approach as different as I could. Obviously you treated a recital by (one artist) quite differently to a recital by another artist, you'd try to be perhaps more generous to people who were very, very young and beginning. But otherwise I don't think that there was a general approach.

Were you aware of a canonical style of writing that you felt had to live up to at all in terms of classical music criticism? (2m45)

Well *The Times* in those days, I don't know if it's the same any more, tended to be quite formal. You couldn't use contractions, you couldn't say 'can't' or 'wouldn't', you just couldn't do that. I don't like those things so I probably wouldn't use them anyway. I'm not aware that the paper had a house style or house rules other than that. But again your writing is conditioned by the event which is conditioned by the place you go to. I think that's inevitable, that writing for *The Times* was different from other things I did, like I'm writing for *The Listener*, and other things I do. The vehicle changes the way that you write.

So in what way was writing for *The Times* different to some of those other publications which you contributed to? (4m08)

Well one way is this, you talked about how many pieces I did, and for *The New Yorker* it was something like one every other day so I kind of hoped that there was a regular readership there and that one could build up a story that was longer than each individual piece if you like. At the same time you want each individual piece to work by itself. This is something I always felt very strongly about, that a review should, anybody should be able to read it just as anybody should be able to read a report on the French election. So anybody should be able to read them. I tried to avoid the kind of 'oh this is very different to the Covent Garden performance in 1958' that kind of thing where you're assuming a huge backlog of knowledge that you and maybe one per cent of your readers share. I tried to avoid that. But at the same time one hoped that there was, somewhere out there, a regular audience. When I started writing regularly in newspapers, very, very rarely did one get a letter from a reader, saying either 'I agree' or 'I disagree', very, very rarely, probably fewer than ten a year. So though I tried to feel there was a regular readership out there the readership was not responsive.

This is on *The Times*? (6m23)

Yes.

So is it the case that with other publications were you able to adopt a more specialist style of writing, but with *The Times* you had to apply perhaps a more generalist approach?

Yes, well that's another thing. I wouldn't put a dominant seventh into a *Times* review, and when talking about new music, which I did quite a lot, I tried to find ways around and methods that would convey an impression without becoming too technical. I mean certainly you could assume that people wouldn't be reading a music review in a newspaper if they didn't know what a chord was, but too much further than that and I'd have to be very careful in a newspaper. Everything I'm saying of course applies to the 1980s, it's very, very different now.

Did you find that different sub genres required different critical styles or different approaches - perhaps for a contemporary piece, or a piece on opera or early music? (8m02)

No. I tried to make every piece as different as I could. I tried to avoid having a typical way of doing it. One thing you have to bear in mind, and I can't remember what year Wapping was? 1986. Well before 1986, before there were computers, and I never really understood why this happened, but before 1986 reviews nearly always appeared the next morning and that meant that you had to have phoned in your copy by 11.30pm on the night of the event, well you either went into the newspaper office or you phoned it in, one or the other. Even if an opera finished at 11pm it had to be done by 11.30pm, so those reviews written before 1986 were written very, very fast. In some cases, I remember once I was given 900 words to write and I had half an hour. So there isn't much time for planning the shape or having second thoughts, you really have to accept any words that pop into your head and scribble them down when you are writing at that kind of rate. And the other thing is that that was the way things were organised, so you'd have 325 words for a concert or 500 words for a concert or whatever it was, and you had to fill that space. So the amount of space that was there was dependent on things that were completely irrelevant like whether or not there was a big interview, like how big a photograph of the interview subject they wanted to have, how much advertising had appeared right at the last minute. So you might go to what you consider to be a very, very important concert and there'd be only 250 words because there'd been an advert and you'd had the space shaved off, or you might go to what you thought was a very run of the mill concert and have to write 600 words. There was no discussion about that, that was fixed. But after 1986 when reviews were never going in on the day you had the option then of saying 'well this is a really great concert I want 450 words' and then 'well we can't do that, but you can have 400' or whatever. There was much more dialogue, and also then you had the possibility then of not reviewing at all. Now occasionally it would happen that you would go to a concert, particularly a debut concert, and it would be so lamentable that you really didn't want to say anything, but up to 1986 you had to say something because the space was there in the paper, the space was laid out on the page and you had to fill it. So the task really radically changed about the middle of this period.

Because of the technology? (11m04)

Why modern technology should decelerate rather than accelerate I never understood, but that is what happened. I very much regretted that because I thought part of the strength of newspaper reviewing was that you were getting news, it was a 'news' paper, and just as it would have seemed rather strange to read in Wednesday's paper what had happened in parliament on Monday so to me it seemed a bit strange to read what had happened in the Festival Hall on Monday. I thought that was not what we should be doing but I could never get anybody to explain to me why we had to do it that way or why we couldn't do it as we had done before. I think also for audience members, I don't know about musicians, but for audience members it's very different if you go to a concert and then you go and have your dinner, or you go back home, and you sleep and there in the morning is a review of the concert you went to last night while it's still fresh in your memory. That's a very, very different experience to reading it the next day. A colossal difference. (13m17)

Did you consider your role as a classical music critic to be essentially the same as that of the rock or pop or jazz critics at *The Times* or did you feel that you were doing something that was slightly different? (13m43)

I don't know what the other critics were doing, I never read them. When I was Chief Critic on *The Times* I thought it was part of my duty to read what the other people writing about classical music were writing, that I was kind of responsible, so I did read them. But otherwise I never read anybody else.

I wanted to ask actually, what did that involve being the Chief Music Critic? So you had more involvement with the classical writers, but your remit didn't include the rock, pop or jazz writers as such?

No, no, no.

So with the other classical writers, you were reading their work, was that to edit it in any way? (14m39)

No, no, no. I didn't have any editorial function that was all done by the people who were there in office hours or, before 1986, it was done by the people who were there late at night, there were Sub Editors. *The Times* didn't have a specialist Arts Sub Editor there late at night, *The Financial Times* did. All of the reviews for *The Financial Times* that came in late at night were edited by somebody

who was familiar with arts editorial. At *The Times* they didn't have that, it was just done by anybody who happened to be available. So I didn't do any editing but I was kind of responsible to the Arts Editor for the other people who were writing so I had to know what they were up to and also, partly because one gets so little feedback from readers, it's very nice to have a colleague say 'oh that was a good piece' or 'I didn't understand your last paragraph' or whatever, just to get some feedback. So I tried to give some feedback to colleagues who were on the same paper. One odd feature of the job is that you would almost never see people who were writing on the same paper because they would be at other events. So at the Queen Elizabeth Hall or wherever you were I would see Andrew Clements or David Murray or people who were working on other papers but I would never see somebody who was working on *The Times*. In that way it was very difficult to maintain a feeling of team, so you feel that in a way you are in a team of people working on other papers because you see them all the time. I would probably see Andrew Clements every week certainly, but not at all the people who were working on the same paper. (17m00)

So thinking about editorial influence, was it John Higgins who was the Arts Editor?

Yes but I can't remember when he ceased to be. But he was the person who took me on. He was certainly there from the early 1970s, I never worked for anybody before him. But when he left I'm not altogether sure, it was before 1991, and then it was Richard Morrison.

So was it John Higgins and then Richard Morrison that were deciding which artists the different journalists would cover?

No that was my job. That was the job of the Chief Critic. I would draw up the diary, I did it every month which is what Bill Mann my predecessor had done, other papers I think did it every week but I did it every month so that people could plan some kind of social life around it. If you don't know what you're doing next week then it's very difficult to accept dinner invitations and so on. So I would do it, like around now I would tell people what they were doing in November, so in the middle of the month I'd send out a diary for the following month. (18m40)

And did that include the jazz and rock and pop people?

No, no, no, just the people writing about classical music.

So were the rock, pop and jazz people determining the coverage themselves, did they have more freedom?

Entirely independent, yes.

So editors and yourself were much more hands-on with classical writers?

Entirely, I didn't read what they (wrote), it was entirely separate. (19m36)

Was there a hierarchy in terms of which genre achieved the most page space and/or most dominant position on the page between 1981 – 1991 and did the hierarchy change during the period 1981 - 1991?

I think it changed. John Higgins, he wasn't a push over but he was very committed to classical music, opera and theatre. He had a vision of *The Times* arts coverage being serious. That didn't mean it couldn't be witty as well but it had to deal with serious things at a decent length. I'm quite sure he would never have gone through the choice to hear a Birtwistle piece but he knew Birtwistle was important and given him serious attention. I think it changed after he left.

In what way? (21m08)

I think, well I don't know that it's entirely a matter of personality, but something changed in newspaper culture which may have had to do with the beginning of the internet and people beginning to get information in other ways. But I left in early 1992 and certainly well by then there was strong pressure to not cover so many concerts, to cover them more briefly, to do round-ups where you covered three or four concerts in one piece. I don't think that was because classical music was being pushed down the hierarchy in favour of jazz or rock or whatever, I don't think it was that. But in general the space that the newspaper wanted to give to reviews was decreasing.

So reviews were being seen as less important perhaps? (22m42)

Yes.

So you said that there was a preference for serious arts coverage so I'm thinking that perhaps classical was seen as top of the tree above rock, pop and jazz, would that be a fair assumption? (23m06)

Well you will be able to see. My guess is that rock music coverage increased during the 1980s but I don't feel that classical music criticism was in some kind of competition with rock. I felt, certainly until the late 1980s, that there would be odd times when you wouldn't get the space you were hoping for and other times when you got more space than you were hoping for. But basically I thought we were doing the job until the late 1980s and then it started to get very, very difficult. Actually John Higgins wasn't succeeded by Richard Morrison he was succeeded by somebody else who only lasted less than a year but I can't remember what his name was.

OK, so somebody in between?

Yes.

You've already touched upon volumes of different articles types and how they may have changed, you've said that there were possibly fewer words for reviews, or less space for reviews at least, and you were doing more round-up pieces where you were covering three or four concerts at once, but what about previews, was there any change in the frequency of previews, were you being asked to write more previews, or features that kind of thing? (24m50)

I'm not sure that I did such a lot of that. There's a difficulty when you've interviewed somebody and then you go to the performance. So I think we tried to keep those functions a little bit separate. I did do some feature articles but I can't remember that I did a lot. I maybe did a few little interviews with composers.

But there was no great pressure on you to suddenly increase the number of features or previews?

No.

What about event guides, did you suddenly find that you were being asked to write more of that kind of article? I think there was something called 'Preview' and 'Critics Choice' in this period? (26m23)

I can't remember. There was a time when I had to do a lot of little record reviews, certainly in the late 1980s, very very short record reviews which seemed a little bit pointless. But that was always a problem, and I think all newspapers find this a problem, that it's very difficult to give adequate space to recordings because there's so many coming out. I know that classical music recording, certainly through the 1980s with the coming of the CD, there was a huge volume of classical recordings. And just the pace, you'd have to sort of listen to the first ten minutes of a record before you'd know if it's of any interest or not. And it was very, very difficult to find the time to deal with records adequately and then it was virtually impossible to find the space to write about them.

What about the use of pictures as accompaniments to music articles, you've already mentioned that that could make a difference to the number of words?

I didn't decide anything there. That was up to the editors. I often didn't know whether there would be a picture or not. My guess is that a new production at Covent Garden was likely to get a picture.

Did you see an increase in the number or size of pictures accompanying your work at all?

I'm not sure that that struck me. When I started work on *The Times*, in about 1972/1973, virtually every day there would be three columns of reviews and there was much more text in those days than there was a few years later. (29m42)

It is often said, by academics and music journalists, particularly about rock music, that there was a decline which began in the 1980s. But do you sense whether or not there has been a parallel decline in classical music criticism either in the broadsheet press or in general? If so, what factors do you think triggered the decline and when do you think it was finally cemented? (30m28)

Well there's a great temptation for me to say that there was a decline, that is the way I feel, perhaps it's a personal feeling, I don't know. But the kind of writing one sees in the supposedly serious newspapers now to me it's a different level to fifteen years ago but certainly a different level to twenty years ago. I sense, well it's hard to know, if people are being put under pressure for space, anything for me under 300 words for a review becomes meaningless, because you can't develop an argument, and once you've commented the game's all over. People inevitably are going to, the two things go together because you can't be serious on a postage stamp. So it's pressure for space as much as anything and that started happening in the late 1980s. (31m58)

Do you see it as a result of Wapping or increased competition?

It seemed to coincide, or it happened very shortly after Wapping, that it was difficult to keep the space going yes. It's also the people involved. When I started working on *The Times* my colleagues were, Bill Mann, Stanley Sadie, Joan Chissell, Max Harrison, Stephen Walsh, all of those people had some kind of credibility as scholars, all of those people wrote books. Bill Mann wrote on Mozart, Stanley Sadie was the Editor of Grove at that time, Max Harrison I think had a book on jazz, Chissell was an internationally recognised Schumann scholar, Stephen Walsh at that time had a book on Schumann. It's very, very different now. Again, that's part of the way the world has changed. Musicology, like other academic disciplines, has got more professional now, and it's very difficult for musicologists to take newspaper criticism seriously, and they just don't. (34m10)

Did you notice any changes in music advertising at *The Times* between 1981 – 1991?

No, I honestly didn't.

Was there any shift in terms of the involvement of PR Officers and if so how did that affect your writing after 1981?

I don't think at that time, no it was still pretty gentlemanly, or lady-like, because a lot of them were women. The kind of thrusting PR people one's got now didn't really exist in the 1980s. (35m39)

So there wasn't an increase in PR Officers taking you out to lunch, anything like that, and trying to get you 'on board' so to speak?

I don't think I was, no, I hardly ever was taken out to lunch, hardly ever, maybe once a year and that might be somebody in a record company or somebody in one of the orchestras but it was pretty, the gloves stayed on, there was no great pressure. It was a matter of getting to know people, and of them just trying to explain what their company or their orchestra was up to. It happened very rarely.

So the Wapping Dispute, you've said that things seemed to shift after that point, but did it affect your writing directly and/ or your career and if so how? (37m14)

Yes. I mean you can find out when John Higgins ceased to be Arts Editor, but it was fairly shortly after Wapping. But I think John was shifted across to become Editor of obituaries, and he's no longer with us so he can't give us his report on this, but I think it's fair to say that he didn't want to leave the arts page, he'd been with it for twenty years or something and it was pressure from above to change the arts page more towards publicity and to begin the process of dumbing down of reviews. I don't know this for certain but my guess is that John wanted to maintain the standards he'd established, but upper management wanted to change them so he took the only course out which was to move to another part of the paper.

So there was a sense then that the upper levels of management levels were moving towards publicity and beginning this process of dumbing down.

I never had a memo from *The Times* Editor saying 'you've got to write shorter sentences' or anything like that, I never had that. But what I did get was less reviews and that kind of has the same effect. Then what I got in 1992 was the sack.

It's a broad question but how did the political climate of the 1980s, i.e. Thatcherism, affect your writing and career?

Well I can think of one concrete way. There was a big increase in commercial funding and commercial sponsorship. That was the government's policy, to try and push the funding into the private sector and the private sector did respond. And there was a kind of unwritten rule, I don't remember where it came from, a kind of rule that you had to mention if it had been sponsored by Tesco, it never was sponsored by Tesco then, but you had to say somewhere in the piece 'this concert was sponsored by Tesco'. It was never very easy to do that in a natural way, it always stuck out like a sore thumb, but we kind of had to go along with that and do that. The idea was that everybody benefited because the arts organisations got the money and it was a publicity exercise for the sponsor. You can probably find examples of that. But it was strange commercial thing. But I don't know how a string quartet recital would be covered differently because of the political climate.

Yes, it was perhaps more a case of what was available out there than the nature of the music or the concerts.

Well that's a whole other thing. But I think concert life in the 1980s was still as rich as it had been the 1970s, the shrinkage there came later. That would be my guess. (42m46)

In the 1990s?

Yes

What about changes in music media, you've already mentioned CDs, saying that there were many, many of them to review and not enough time to do it. But was there anything else, MTV or stereo or anything else to do with CDs that might have affected writing? (43m24)

No. Video must have come in very late in this period, if at all and I don't think there was a lot of opera available on video tape.

What about newly emerging magazines or newspaper titles, particularly *The Independent*, but anything else you can think of as well. How did any other publications affect music coverage in *The Times* between 1981 – 1991? (44m06)

I can't say. I don't think there was any effect.

How far are we through the questions?

I've got all of the questions on employment still but they tend to be quite short, I can fly through those.

Because I do have to go out.

OK, no problem. How about another ten minutes?

Yes that's fine.

Did *The Independent* have any impact at all, that you are aware of, on *The Times*?

No. I wouldn't be aware because I didn't read any of the other newspapers.

And there was no pressure from above saying '*The Independent* is doing x, y or z and we must do the same'?

Oh, absolutely not. That's never arisen, never. And the same goes for *The Telegraph* as well. No, no, no.

Could you just sum up briefly in a sentence or two perhaps what you think the key changes were in the period between 1981 – 1991 (45m45)

Well I think we've already said. My impression is that the first half of the period was pretty flat, it just went on unchanged at *The Times*. We were covering as many concerts, and at the same kind of length, and when I say concerts I include opera performances as well. But the pressure came on in the later 1980s and there were a number of factors. One is the fact that reviews were no longer overnight and the kind of justification for them being in newspapers was taken away and therefore it was so much easier to reduce the space. After all the only justification for a concert review is that it's news. This was always the argument, when things start to get tight, 'well what is the point of reviewing an oboe quartet?' or whatever it might be. Well the point of reviewing is saying 'this is an important event that's happened'. You might just as well say 'well what is the point of talking about a political event?' well it's news, it happened. Once it's no longer being treated as news then you've lost that argument. And concerts, opera and theatre they ceased to be treated as news by newspapers, and therefore they could be treated as kind of magazine elements like the cookery column or the travel pages. (47m57)

Interview with Nicholas Kenyon CBE
Henry Wood House, BBC. 15th August 2006

Part A

(1m45) Probably what we ought to do first is just establish the chronology, as far as I'm concerned. Yes, that would be great. You wrote I think for three of the papers included in my study, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*?

Yes, well what happened was I started writing freelance music criticism in about 1976, while I was doing some work for the BBC as well, and that was mainly for *The Financial Times* first and then I did odd bits for *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, one or two others. But then in 1979 I went to New York and wrote for *The New Yorker* for three years with Andrew Porter which was fantastic. And while I was there I suppose I was writing the odd article for English papers but really nothing very much. So then I came back in 1982 and had a contract with *The Times* at that point, I was also Music Editor of *The Listener* and edited *Early Music*, which is an OUP journal, and I think that I was at *The Times* from 1982 to 1986 and then moved to *The Observer*. I was first the number two on *The Observer* with Peter Heyworth, and then following his retirement I took over as the Chief Music Critic and that only stopped when I got the job at Radio 3 in 1992. So the only thing I'd be surprised about here is what I was writing for *The Sunday Times* in that period, but anyway, we can come to that...

So, can you just start off by telling me about the style of writing that you adopted, and whether that changed within any of those publications? (4m29)

I had no idea of how to do music criticism when I started doing it, so I suppose I did pick up a style and an approach from people around who I admired, and when I started on *The Financial Times* there was Dominic Gill, there was Max Loppert, there was Ronald Crichton, who all gave one helpful hints. I came at it from a fundamentally non-academic background because I had never studied music. So I was doing it from the point of view of someone who was a music enthusiast who liked writing about music and in the circumstances that one wrote daily criticism then, it was very much a matter of saying what it was like, and I always took that as the sort of essential task to convey some impression to a reader who hadn't been there, what the concert was like, what the reaction to it was and whether one thought it was good, bad or indifferent. And so that often included putting a little bit of background in, a little bit of information about the rarer works in the programme, so that it wasn't just about performance. There was a little bit more than that, there was a little bit of context so that people felt that they had got something out of it, even if they hadn't been to the concert. That's the real problematical thing about classical music criticism for concerts, it's here today and gone tomorrow, and you're not even discussing an opera production which people can go back and see and disagree with. You are basically doing something that has ceased to be, and so I suppose my approach has always tried to be as vivid and direct and clear as possible, not to obfuscate, not to avoid the issue if something was bad. But I think if you look at it, I hope you would come to the conclusion that my style was my style rather than the style of the papers. I suppose writing for *The Times* was a little bit more punchy and immediate than writing for *The Financial Times*, the notices were usually smaller, they were more likely to be 300 words for an overnight review whereas on the *FT* one often got 400 or 450, you'll be able to measure this in your database, and that makes quite a difference. And then of course there was a fundamental change in weekly writing for *The Observer* because there you had 1200 words and essentially you could basically choose what they were about. You could go to four or five things in the week and decide only to write about one of them if you wanted. You could mix and match things so that they added up to a coherent piece, but it was a pretty regular 1200 words a week which I think probably people don't get now. You did have to write about the things that took place in that week because it was a newspaper. The wonderful thing about writing for *The New Yorker* was that you could write a completely thematic piece including concerts you had been to six months ago if you wanted to. That was a much more relaxed way to do it.

But I certainly don't think that there was a canonical style of writing. I really feel that you were allowed to be what you wanted to be, as long as you were accurate and had the respect of the music community, in terms of what you wrote being accurate rather than inaccurate. I think you were left pretty free to create your own style and that was what the papers wanted, they wanted a bit of personality.

And so not too much adaptation to suit a house style?

I mean maybe I'm deluding myself on that, but I honestly wouldn't say so, no. You just wanted to write well. *The Observer* I suppose did have a slightly literary tradition of music criticism, because Peter Heyworth was very much a literary figure rather than a musical figure, and one tried to follow in those footsteps. But I certainly didn't have to force myself to write in a way I didn't want to write, I suppose that's the key thing.

Were they being very prescriptive around what you chose?

Well that's fundamentally different really. *The Times*, and I think this would apply to most daily papers in those days, had an Arts Editor and an Arts Sub-Editor who between them would decide how much space there was and then the Chief Music Critic would allocate all the concerts a month at a time and we'd all get these schedules. Indeed Hilary was around at the same time at *The Times* so she'd be able to talk through this system, I don't know how that's changed now. So I would get assigned fourteen concerts or something to go to. So to that extent I didn't have any choice. Of course then it was totally different on *The Observer* because either I would, in the early years, sort things out with Peter Heyworth directly and we would decide between us what was going to be covered or then subsequently I just decided myself and went and wrote about them, and that was what Editors trusted you to do really, to choose the things that were interesting. I can't think of examples either on *The Times* or *The Observer* where I was forced to go to something I didn't want to go to, except possibly on *The Observer* going to Bayreuth once, which I didn't want to do. But it all worked out alright in the end. (11m22)

The person I worked for on *The Times* was John Higgins who was the Arts Editor at that time. He as it were employed me, although we'll come to all that. And then the Arts Editor of *The Observer*, it might actually be worth your talking to one or two Editors as well as critics. I'd really like to if I can. Well I'll give you the number of the person I worked for on *The Observer*, called John Lucas, he wrote the biography of Reginald Goodall and he's just writing a biography of Beecham and he's very much around and I'm sure he would be happy to talk to you. John Lucas was the Arts Editor and Terence Kilmartin was the Literary Editor and they sort of worked together. So they asked me to come to *The Observer* in 1986, which I did, and then Terry left and died quite soon afterwards, John left, Gillian Widdicombe then became the Arts Editor of *The Observer*, oh no, sorry, in between John and Gillian there was a chap called Nicholas Wapshott who was a career journalist on the paper who I think now either still works for *The Times* as an Editor or was in Washington for a while. Anyway, he was Arts Editor for a short period. So those were the people who, as it were, looked at your copy. Although on *The Times*, because it was an overnight operation of course, the Arts Editor never actually saw your copy because he would have gone home for the day. The Arts Sub-Editor would lay out the page, and he would give you a wordage during the day, this was very, very meticulous stuff in those days, I mean it's a bit more chaotic now. So he would say 'it's 325 words' and if you wrote 325 words you could be pretty sure it wouldn't be cut if everything was working. And so at the end of the day you would go to the concert, come back to the office and sit at a typewriter and type your review and then give it to the Sub-Editors on the homepages who knew where it was going to go. They usually didn't know anything about it and were more or less unsympathetic to this sort of material being given to them at half past eleven at night when they had other things to do, but hey that was the way it went. And because the page had been well set up everything usually worked well. You could alternatively phone in your notice to the Copy Takers. Well I never liked doing that because a) you had to spell everything out for them b) it was a bit unreliable and c) they were always so argumentative. They tended to disagree with your criticism. So whenever I was in London I used to just go round to the office, which was in the Grays Inn Road, and type. *The Times* office then was the building in the Grays Inn Road that's just next to the ITN building, I can't remember what it's called now, it's just an office block now. But if we went to the Grays Inn Road I could point out to you the actual corner where I used to sit. So you were left amazingly free and responsible in terms of turning in your stuff. (15m39)

And they didn't become more hands-on as that period progressed as far as you can remember?

That's difficult for me to say, because I went from daily to Sunday in 1986 I can't say I saw a real change over either of the periods. What I would say is that all the time that I was at *The Times* the people dealing with the page, whether the Arts Editor or the Arts Sub-Editor, knew a quite significant amount about music and so were reasonably expert in giving an opinion or saying the day after 'I thought you got that wrong' or whatever it may be, and that was true when I went to *The Observer*.

But there was increasingly less knowledge among the people that were doing the editing. At *The Observer*? Yes.

By the way, the other person who'd be a very good interviewee is Richard Morrison, he's still at *The Times*, but he's been there for ages and he was the Arts Editor for a period as well as being a critic and he's now reverted to being a sort of critic and columnist. I would have thought he'd be very open. (17m15)

I'm particularly interested in whether there was a hierarchy between the different genres?

Certainly in the early 1980s it was totally dominated by classical music. Everybody assumed that classical music was the most important thing and there would be occasional notices or pages devoted to pop once a week or something, but the regular stuff of music criticism was classical music. Now as I say, I can't say that I noticed any significant change in that before 1992 when I stopped doing it. I would say that it's really the following decade that has seen pop take over from classical as the dominant genre. I remember on the *FT*, so that would have been late 1970s, that there might have been four or five classical music reviews a night and one chap occasionally got in a jazz review about once a fortnight as a sort of special treat. So I think that was how it was then. But I don't think that reflects inaccurately the way those genres of music were perceived in the outside world really. I think it began to change pretty dramatically in the 1990s but I wouldn't link that to Thatcherism, I would link it to the emergence of New Labour and the sort of whole 'cool Britannia' movement which was a little bit consciously anti-elitist, and the sort of perception that classical music was a slightly elitist activity, although we know it isn't, gained ground. I think probably popular music and jazz and rock and pop had been unfairly minimised in coverage and I think there was a sudden realisation that this is what people were actually listening to and to get to a new audience they really wanted to cover that. So I can't really say that the emergence of regular popular music criticism affected the coverage of classical music in my time at all, and again you'd have to prove that or not by looking at the statistics, but I would say I was still writing a solid 1200 words a week for *The Observer* and it was well displayed and prominent until 1992. (20m20)

However, on the next question there was a definite trend towards more features at the expense of reviews, I would say. Because, both in the *FT* and *The Times* I think originally there was a feeling that an arts page should be made up of arts reviews and that was why we were able to do so many of them at a reasonable length. But then, increasingly, features and interviews became the flavour of the month and you would have lead features and interviews with reviews underneath, and I did a lot of those for *The Times* in that four years 1982-86, looking back on it, I interviewed a lot of musicians. But they were quite substantial pieces, they weren't just puff pieces, they were usually talking to some conductor or instrumentalist or opera director who had something just about coming up, so it was tied to current events. But I enjoyed doing that because it gave you a different perspective from just reviewing, you got to meet these people and interacted with them. But previews was rather separate really, I mean we didn't do previews as such, not the sort of thing you get these days in *The Sunday Times* Culture section, 'Highlights of the Week', we never did that. Music obituaries I didn't have anything to do with so I wouldn't really know.

Yes I noticed when *The Independent* first came along it seemed to really make something of music obituaries.

Well it made something of obituaries generally didn't it. Maybe that did other get other papers to sharpen up their acts, but I never wrote obituaries so I don't really know. Again there's a very interesting man on *The Times* who runs the obituaries now, called Ian Brunskill, I can't remember what he used to be, he was either Editor of *Opera Now*, or one of those magazines, anyway he's a very musically interested journalist and I'm sure that he would have an observation about obituaries over the period.

Pictures, well I would say again that was basically different between the two papers. *The Times* wasn't fundamentally very interested in pictures, it never had pictures with reviews to my memory. It would always have a picture with a feature or an interview, no that's not quite true because if you went to a foreign opera production you would pick up photos from the press people there and then take them back and occasionally they might use one. *The Observer* was fundamentally different because *The Observer* had photographers on staff, must have had four or five, and one got to know them very well and they would often come and photograph an opera especially, a rehearsal or something. So most times when your 1200 words were at the top of the page there would be a major

photograph and some of them were very, very creative photographs, and I would say it was a pretty important part of *The Observer* style to have a strong photograph. But again I wouldn't say that radically changed in this decade. (24m55)

I didn't know if larger pictures were coming along or if there were more colour pictures and if so if that helped you to achieve a more dominant position on the page?

I see, no because we were never in colour in my time. I suppose yes it's possible if you had a strong picture that you would get a better sort of display. I remember being very annoyed when *The Observer* wanted me to go to Bayreuth and review *The Ring* and it was an incredibly visually stunning production and I did bring back a lot of photos but they didn't use any of them and as a consequence they squashed the review right at the bottom of the page. So you didn't feel it was really worth it.

So, the Wapping Dispute (26m)

Well the thing was, I was incredibly lucky for some reason because, when was Wapping? 1986. I had already left *The Times* and gone to *The Observer* by then. So it wasn't any consequence of that at all and I know that a lot of the people I was working with at *The Times* were pretty agonised about Wapping and didn't want to go, but in the end they did because that was what was going to happen, as it were. But it had no impact on me because I had definitely left and moved to *The Observer* before it happened. And I would honestly say that the political climate, unless I was being very naive about it, didn't have an impact on how I wrote or what I wrote. I did try and write quite a lot about the politics of arts funding and orchestras, opera houses all those sort of socio-economic aspects of music but it was pretty secondary really, and I was just getting involved in Arts Council panels and that sort of thing, seeing it a bit from the inside at that point. But I can't say that, if what you mean is was there a climate at the papers that affected how you wrote about things, I didn't.

I wondered if it created any editorial instability which then had a knock on effect on your work?

I couldn't really say about that. I didn't feel it anyway, I would say. (27m42)

Various texts I've read suggest that lots of new publications came into existence with the print technology changes, and particularly with *The Independent* coming to the market, I wondered if that affected you and what you were writing at all?

Funnily enough it's slightly the other way around. I don't know if you know those magazines that used to exist called *Music and Musicians*, *Dance and Dancers*, *Plays and Players*, there was a whole stable of them, they were monthly magazines that ran out of a place in Victoria where a lot of us cut our teeth before we ever got onto the broadsheets, and the fact that they ceased to exist meant it was much more difficult for people to get a foothold in newspapers and daily criticism because there was nowhere for them to practice first. So they lost an entry route. Exactly. Of course there were other magazines around yes and very interesting things going on. I think it wasn't really until the explosion of the internet that you felt there was a whole other way of getting all this stuff which meant that maybe broadsheets were somewhat outdated. I mean when *The Independent* started it was incredibly traditional in the way it approached all those things which was actually helpful because it reinforced the idea that it was a worthwhile way of doing it. When did the Indie start? That was 1986, October 1986, and *The Independent on Sunday* was 1990. Yes, yes that's right. (29m25)

So you didn't find that Editors were thinking, 'gosh *The Independent* is doing X, Y or Z, so perhaps we need to change what we're doing'?

Oh I see, no, I don't think they thought that far really. I think they would just plough on, as it were.

Were there any technology changes that came out of Wapping?

The most significant technology change was entirely behind the scenes which was that you could send in your stuff automatically. So after I went to *The Observer* I would quite often not go to the office at all once you could get your computer linked up via a modem and send your stuff in, that was absolutely wonderful.

Were they insisting on that or was that optional?

No they weren't insisting on it at all, I did it for my own convenience. They were perfectly happy if you went in and typed still, which I must have done certainly in the early *Observer* period. I can't remember when I first got my first Amstrad and I got this very complicated thing that meant I was able to connect into *The Observer* system. Of course the arrival of CDs in the mid-1980s made a

huge difference to the music industry generally and so we were reviewing a lot more CDs because that was the time of the real classical boom. (31m07)

Did you find that you were reviewing lots of old material?

No because at that time, well I suppose there were a lot of reissues, but the companies were producing so much and they were focussed on new material so that's what you were making a choice about in the Sunday papers, that was the sort of stuff you would write mostly, mostly new. (31m34)

So I suppose those were the main developments really. We started to write about television music which hadn't been much written about before, because that was a very good age of documentary, film making for television, new composers all that sort of thing. And *The Observer*, I suppose that was one thing about *The Observer*, they were very committed to contemporary music and keen for one to cover that. That was a difference from *The Times*, because John Higgins on *The Times* was really an opera man and he tolerated contemporary music but he didn't really enthuse about it.

Maybe I was writing the occasional feature for *The Sunday Times* when I was on *The Times*, I'm starting to think about it, maybe that's why you've got *Sunday Times* things by me. (Checking a spreadsheet listing articles authored by Nicholas Kenyon within the database) *The Sunday Times*, oh I see, these were things I wrote from America, how interesting yes, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and I see, I'd forgotten that. I did do a record a month for *The Sunday Times* as well, they had a whole little clutch of people doing that. So you did those while you were over in America. Yes, and I remember these things down at the bottom, I see so you chose March, I get it.

So at *The Sunday Times* you would have been freelance? Yes.

So I think those were the main developments, and I would say until 1991 that the papers were all committed to having classical music critics and that that was absolutely unquestioned. Again I think if you talk to people that the real change would have been in the 90s in terms of there being less work for people. (34m35)

In terms of production changes, with newspapers becoming larger and with there being an increase in the number of supplements, I didn't know if that would have generated more work?

Yes, I would have thought so but again I think that was more of a 90s phenomenon. I do remember that *The Sunday Times* magazine used to carry recording reviews and articles about classical music, sort of 'building a library' type of classical articles, which you can't conceivably imagine them doing today in a colour magazine, but that must have been, maybe that was later 1970s rather than 1980s. But I think the record reviewing went into the magazines certainly in the 1980s. (35m38)

On the 'golden age' question, I think everybody looks to the time slightly before themselves as the golden age but I think there was a golden age of classical music criticism, which was when Desmond Shawe-Taylor was in *The Sunday Times*, Peter Heyworth was in *The Observer*, William Mann and Stanley Sadie were on *The Times* and people like Edward Greenfield were on *The Guardian*. But maybe I'm just saying that because those are the people that I grew up with reading so those are the ones I admired most. But they were 1960s early 1970s. I don't know whether any of us who came after that really had the same authority that they did. I think we were more journalists as it were, which is fair enough and I think what we did was a whole lot more interesting than what the critics are able to do today because they are so restricted in the amount of space that they have, and I think there isn't now the commitment on the part of the papers to classical music criticism today which makes them all a bit depressed. We were all more optimistic I think. Also remember that we were living through a huge boom time in the classical music industry generally of course, the arrival of the CD in the mid-1980s and then The Three Tenors and then Nigel Kennedy and the Four Seasons, this was a huge growth time, unrealistic, unrealistic growth time for which one then paid the price in the 90s when interest began to level off. I don't think interest is any less now than it has been, certainly not in live events like *The Proms*, they absolutely flourish, but I think there were over expectations caused by the fact that at the end of the 1980s there was this enormous boom. So I think that is why my perception is that changes in the value of classical music criticism in the papers didn't really start before the early 1990s, because there was a big boom going on and people were not going to cut back on coverage at that time.

Just going back this hierarchy idea, you said about classical being at the top, but did you have any sense of what came beneath classical?

Well originally it was jazz, but I think that was very quickly supplanted by rock and pop generally which is more what you have today. Jazz was always quite an upmarket musical interest for the broadsheet reader and I think there was a perception that people who read *The Financial Times* and *The Times* wouldn't be interested in pop music, but that had already begun to change with people like William Mann on *The Times* reviewing the Beatles back in the 1960s and so on, but that was 'oh what an exciting departure from the norm', whereas it becoming absolutely natural was a much later thing.

So you think jazz perhaps got pushed out of the way a little but by rock and pop?

Yes, a little bit, I would say so. (39m36)

Did the quality of your writing depend on the quality of the performance you wrote about? I think it's easier to write about anything stimulating or unusual or different. The problem is to review the tenth faintly uninteresting performance of Beethoven's *Seventh* and find something new to say about it. If I think about my reviews, the reviews that I think were the best were of either very good things or very bad things. It is of course much easier to write bad reviews than it is good reviews. I mean because good is good and it's easy to come across as gushing, whereas bad has so many different shades that you can explore endlessly. So I would say I wrote some quite good 'good' reviews and some quite good 'bad' reviews but it's the ones in between that one forgets about really. So I don't think it was the quality of the performance as such it was just whether they got a response.

On to music advertising. I know *The Times* wasn't big on music advertising.

I honestly don't think it had any impact at all. Nothing conscious. The only thing that would happen would be, and that also happened on *The Observer*, that they would sell bits of advertising at the bottom of the page so it would encroach on your space a bit.

So you weren't getting your material cut to make space for advertising?

No, I wouldn't say that, no. I suppose sometimes they would say to you on a Thursday or whatever 'I'm afraid it's only 1100 words this week as we've got an advert on the page' but I don't think there was a direct correlation. (42m)

So you don't remember seeing more adverts or larger adverts appearing?

No, I wouldn't say so particularly. And also because also they tended to happen in other parts of the paper, you know *The Times* on a Saturday would have, in *The Saturday Review*, a huge amount of advertising for quite a lot of music events, but that would be on one page and the records would be reviewed on another page.

And did you see any changes at *The Observer* in advertising?

I always sensed it was always quite a struggle for *The Observer* to get advertising but that's only an impression. No, it certainly didn't reduce the amount of editorial space. (42m47)

... (Part B) ...

Is there anything else that I've missed?

I remember once at *The Sunday Times*, typing my review in the office on some esoteric concert and taking it down to these poor Home Subs and giving it to the chap, and he looked at it and then he turned to the chap next to him and said 'you know, these people live in a different world', which is very true because he was dealing with the latest from Beirut or something and trying to get that in to the paper. So I think there was a sense in which all the critics on any paper were regarded as a little bit effete, out to the side, not really the main business of newspapers. But I would say that throughout the 1980s there was a real commitment, on the papers that I was involved in, to giving classical music a lot of exposure, serious coverage and making it entertaining and involving for people. And I think it's only really been during the 90s that there's been a completely wrong feeling that classical music isn't important. That's also been noticeable I would say during the ten years I have been doing *The Proms* in terms of the amount of coverage that we've got, and not that we get little coverage now, we get loads of coverage, but 1996/97/98 you could hardly move for coverage, it

was totally blanket stuff. And just as a completely different example, *The Radio Times* would always do a cover on *The Proms* for years and years, now they cover *The Proms* and do a supplement and so on, but they'll only put someone who is a recognisable person on the cover so *The Proms* doesn't tend to be there. (1h03m03)

Interview with Fiona Maddocks
At her home in Oxford. 25th October 2006

Part A

So you were the first Music Editor for *The Independent*? (2m43)

I was in at *The Independent* from its launch so it was a clean sheet and a clean slate, we could do what we wanted in theory, market pressures notwithstanding etc, and that meant building up a team from nowhere. Even back then already there was a sense of classical music, as it wasn't then called, it was just called music, everything else had names but music was classical music, that there was a notion that it was already being downgraded as a serious art form and that other art forms. Visual arts particularly were coming into their own at that point and it's exploded ever since with the kind of the space you now get for visual arts, which was often not even illustrated then, you would see an arts review and it wouldn't have a picture. So *The Independent* was really trying to break open and do completely different arts coverage. Indeed I think now it's impossible even for me to remember how innovative that arts coverage was because really it set the agenda for arts coverage right across the broadsheets ever since. It was interesting for me because my first conversation with the founder Editor, Andreas Whittam Smith, was about Marriage of Figaro and to find a Fleet Street Editor, I say Fleet Street but it wasn't even Fleet Street then, who had such deep musical knowledge (was rare), indeed his mother was a concert pianist and you would stop on the stairs and he'd say 'oh I've just been listening to Alfred Brendel playing'. So that was the kind of environment, that doesn't mean everybody across the paper felt the same about classical music, it was still a minority, but it was taken very seriously as something that had to be covered in as much depth as limited space in a daily newspaper could allow. (5m10)

Was it influenced by any other publications at that time, the approach that *The Independent* adopted?

No, I don't think it was really. It was influenced by a liberal minded, small 'I', attitude towards covering things that had either not been covered before or were deserving of more space. There was a big commitment to the 'new' rather than only the mainstream South Bank concert hall kind of events. If something was new, as long as it had some validity, it would take priority over a performance of a Beethoven symphony.

So contemporary music?

Was very important. And on something like the second or third day of *The Independent*, which was late October 1986, because it's just had its anniversary, I suggested writing an article about a sound studio on the South Bank involving Boulez and Harrison Birtwistle and someone else and this was thought to be a great idea. Now I don't think that that would be true now. The serious was OK, but it didn't mean you had to write in a boring way, the challenge was to make the serious interesting to a readership which potentially could expect to be interested, so that was always the philosophy. I don't think the phrase 'dumbing down' ever really came into it at that stage.

So it was more about just trying to be innovative and do something different?

Trying to open a door and say 'look there's a world here and you may only have thought there were debut recitals at Wigmore Hall', which were a big thing that were covered then, and the London Philharmonic or whatever but 'there are whole other things around the country as well', which was a very important aspect.

Yes, because the other broadsheets focussed on London.

Well inevitably the focus is London but the other broadsheets tended to have one or two or three critics, I think *The Financial Times* at that time had seven or eight critics, it's interesting, they had a huge number, I don't know whether they were all on contract, and 'the critic' would be sent to Manchester or to Birmingham or Liverpool or to Glasgow or Edinburgh to sort of look around, report, and come back again. I felt quite strongly that there should be regional reviewers. I think there are arguments for and against that but it was important that we had a regional voice and we had to some extent the luxury of, not always enough space, but a willingness to think that it was important to review a concert from Liverpool or important to review a concert from Birmingham, it might only be one or two a month, but we had 'our man' there, in fact there weren't really 'our women' it was mainly 'our man', in those regional centres. (8m48)

So that was very different to the way the other broadsheets were operating? (8m51)

Yes, and some of those still write actually, some of those people that I approached that long ago, until very recently. Raymond Monelle in Edinburgh for example, he was someone I approached early on and he continued to do their Scottish coverage because apart from anything else *The Independent* paid its own way, it didn't accept free trips so it couldn't necessarily afford to pay for critics to travel to these places. The obverse of that is that the place in question, Liverpool or Birmingham or wherever, may have felt that they wanted the main critic to come and see what they were up to rather than the local critic just reporting back, they'd quite liked to have had a visit, so it works both ways. But it was definitely different and it created a lot of voices within the paper, expressing their views. (10m05)

Were you aware of other broadsheets copying anything that you were doing, did you see a knock on effect?

Very quickly. After the first couple of months of *The Independent* a lot of things changed, and it wasn't just in the music coverage. I wouldn't be able to remember precise examples of music things, but right across the arts coverage there was a shaking up, it was cutting edge and everybody wanted to be cutting edge too so a slightly sleepy coverage of the arts was sort of awoken. Early on, and I don't remember when, it would be a long trawl through newspapers to find out, we introduced the first ever music page which was something that now happens automatically. Papers sort of expanded their arts coverage, and now they've rather drawn in again. Now, *The Guardian* remains absolutely loyal and committed to classical music, more than any other paper, and it has its classical music, well it has Friday page and it has something that it calls music and classical music. That sort of division of the paper into days, the idea of a particular art form being on a particular day probably did exist in an embryonic way in the other papers but it really was quite a big thing for *The Independent*, I think it started on a Thursday but it was mainly on a Saturday, it was a Saturday music page, I can't remember when the visual arts or film or whatever are. Now, all papers do that, even if they don't label them perhaps. They tend to think 'right, it's Thursday, this is our big film day', it depends slightly on when the openings are and all the rest of it, but that cutting out an area and saying 'we're going to go big on a particular subject' really hadn't existed, except as a one off here and there, I'm not saying nobody ever did it.

At that point I was called Classical Music Editor I think and there hadn't been such a thing before. I know *The Guardian* still has one, I don't know whether anybody else has one because on the whole critics can just sort of do their own schedule, but I drew up the schedule and I decided what was going to be reviewed, I commissioned the writers, I decided who was, well it wasn't entirely me instructing there was some democracy about it. If somebody was particularly good, like Adrian Jack was superb at reviewing piano recitals so he tended to get the piano recitals and the big appointment was Bayan Northcott as Chief Music Critic but the important thing there was that the Saturday music page every week had a big article from Bayan on really quite tricky subjects and they were not commercial subjects at all, they were entirely music driven. It may be that there would be an event that they would link in with, if somebody was doing a complete Sibelius cycle, that would give him a peg to talk about Sibelius, but his drive would be entirely musical but really quite, what would now seem, esoteric musical matters. But at the time I think there was an expectation that he would write in a way that a determined reader would be able to understand and there was no sense of having to simplify it unless it was really dull or unreadable, but he never was dull or unreadable. But it was pitched quite high and that was innovative, because music criticism up to that point had been allowed to be more serious, you could use a musical term, it could say allegro without having to explain what it meant or it could say Heldentenor without having to explain in brackets what a Heldentenor was. Whereas now any technical (term), except for the most obvious, you could probably get away with pianissimo now, but if you started saying 'the modulation' or 'the coda', you'd have to couch it in terms that were completely comprehensible and unmistakable and there was no sense of taking anything for granted. Now, there is no sense of taking anything for granted. You just can't get away with it. Whereas then there was still a sense in which the writer was going to lead the reader to a greater body of knowledge and it was quite aspirational in that sense. It was really saying 'stick with me and you'll get something out of this'. Of course good writing should always do that but it's harder to get away with now.

Did that approach prevail for long?

It stayed for as long as I was there, I don't mean I was the vessel in which this wonderful high minded stuff flowered, but it wasn't a battle. There were a couple of writers, who I'm not going to name, who were too obscure or maybe they just weren't very good writers, they were too wordy or they would get lost on some very, very obscure trail and then occasionally the Editor would say 'hmm', which is right and proper. But something that was quite tough and challenging was thought to be good, and Bayan's

pieces week in week out were very, he wrote with a very good writing style and incredible depth of knowledge and a very, very purist approach to music. (16m48)

And that was until you left, when was that?

1991 I think.

So that was still very much the approach up until that time?

Yes. (17m08)

You mentioned that it was a fairly democratic process, the way that what was getting reviewed was decided. Was that mostly led by you or did the critics phone you up with ideas?

It was led by me because I just happened to be the person sitting at the centre of all the information, because everything then was obviously just press releases, it wasn't email. A lot of them would have got the press releases as well but not everybody got everything, whereas I was the sort of sieve through which it all passed. But then I also, as I got to know the writers better and they knew the sorts of things that were wanted, they would say 'I noticed there's an amazing something, could I do this?' and I'd say yes if there was the space. (18m27)

The critics I had in addition to Bayan, there was Meredith Oakes and there was Adrian Jack, I'm not going to remember all the others, but for example Meredith did a lot of the new things and Adrian did a lot on the piano as I mentioned. Bayan on the whole liked to do the big orchestral concerts and because he's a composer as well he was sometimes less willing to do the contemporary stuff because of a conflict of interests. Anthony Payne, who hadn't then delved into his Elgar territory - Elgar's Third Symphony, he like Bayan had come from *The Telegraph* and he in fact used to do a lot of the big mainstream romantic repertoire concerts, he was very good at those but not the contemporary stuff because of being a composer. So actually there was quite a pool of people to draw on and there were one or two others who probably got used less often. (19m58)

Would you say that there was a hierarchy between the genres in terms of which might get the most page space or better position on the page, so classical, rock, pop, jazz?

At that time, and it was interesting because there were big pages, obviously full size broadsheet sizes, which now seem just in this short time (now) that we don't have broadsheets any more, so enormous. There wasn't that much advertising so you could actually get a lot of articles on the page. You've seen the layout much more recently than I have, but I remember you kept that bit of the page and there'd often be three reviews, and there would be music. It's unheard of now, but we had that amount of space. I think there was a general consensus between me and the Arts Editor, who is also called Thomas Sutcliffe on *The Independent*, that if there was a really major music event then maybe we'd have a feature about it. But the layout of the page was very much a feature at the top and the reviews elsewhere and it didn't feel like a hierarchy because you just had your space. I don't remember the kind of battles that I now feel. I mean probably one was battling the whole time for a bit more space and reviews did get dropped, but there was a firm belief that they should be covered rather than 'well, we'd better cover something that's classical'. It was definitely a very willing attitude.

So there wasn't a sense that perhaps classical would always get that top spot, at the top of the page, and rock and pop would be further down?

No, no. I think it was moved around. The other thing that's worth noting is that on the whole, although *The Independent's* use of pictures was very pioneering and inventive and original, still it wasn't like new technology now, with sort of desktop publishing where you could put a picture where you want, layout was quite complicated even though it was done on screen (incoming phone call, 22m40)

You were saying about photos and use of pictures (25m06)

Yes, use of pictures. Whereas now, (with) most papers you look at there's quite a lot of little pictures and little head shots, then it was very much have a really strong lead picture to go with the lead feature and the reviews didn't tend to get illustrated. I'm talking about those years that I was there obviously. Sometimes you'd get a little head shot of someone, lower down on the page, but there was quite a classical aesthetic about this very nice page that had this very elegant main feature and then these smaller pieces underneath without images. So what I was going to say was that now if there's a main opera opening there's always a photograph and if you don't get one you think 'that's funny there isn't a photograph', whereas then I don't remember but if I'm correct, usually with the reviews you didn't expect to have a photograph with a review and opera definitely didn't have quite the sexy appeal that it

now has. The obsession now, when I review now, the question is 'is there another performance?' well of course opera has the upper hand in that sense because there's a whole run of performances so an opera review will almost never be cancelled for space reasons whereas if you say 'this very important first performance at the Wigmore Hall' the attitude of 'well, it's gone so why do we want to know?' didn't prevail then. In that time, at *The Independent* and in other papers, everybody had the view that it's important to know and if it's gone in terms of hearing it again we're not a consumer service. Now we're much more a consumer service. We give stars and star ratings, there were no star ratings (then), the idea of star ratings was absolutely grotesque, I mean it was grotesque until quite recently on several papers, but the idea of serving the public in that way, it was much more keeping your reader abreast of cultural goings on rather than 'do I want to go and see this? What does *The Evening Standard* say or what does *The Observer* say?'

So reporting arts coverage as news rather than as a consumer guide?

Yes. But also with a sort of expectation that if there was a major musician in town you'd want to know what he was up to, or what she was doing. Now it would be 'oh well it's just Boulez back again, we've had him quite a lot'.

So do you think pictures perhaps had a role to play in determining what got the top spot at the top of the page?

Well the top spot as far as I remember, as long as I was there, was always a feature and not a review. So Monday would be, I don't know whether it was absolutely strict and I can't remember which day was which, but I know there was always a visual arts review on a Thursday or whatever it was or maybe there was an interview on a different day, and that would come with a very good photograph. The photographs were fantastic. (28m50)

I've heard other people say that opera quite often used to get a wonderful picture and I didn't know if perhaps rock or pop didn't get the top spot because the pictures weren't so great? (29m)

I think you'd have to see if people are remembering correctly. Obviously I'm remembering very particularly from that period for those years I was there. I mean there might have been a big picture at the top and sometimes something at the bottom half of the page, or the lower end of the page. But now things are definitely driven by, not entirely... But let me give you another example; when I worked at *The Observer* where I was Chief Music Critic from 1997 – 2002, I think that's right, it was really hard if it was a week when there wasn't any opera because you would never get a picture because they didn't want a picture of a dead composer. Whereas *The Independent* loved wonderful black and white pictures of, not very dead composers necessarily, but a wonderful picture and photograph of Stravinsky. They loved, partly because the way they used pictures was new and the idea of having, particularly with Bayan's pieces, I remember we'd look at pictures and find extraordinary ones that hadn't really been seen before of Rachmaninoff in his house, or whatever, and do it quite large. That simply wouldn't happen now, or it would but only very occasionally. In *The Observer*, theatre or the visual arts, by the time I was writing for *The Observer* were very much the things that got prominence and classical music, you'd get the same number of words but you'd be shunted because, well partly it wasn't so sexy and partly you couldn't illustrate it as well, you don't want a picture of Bach. (31m16)

Did different article types change, so perhaps when *The Independent* first launched you've said about this plan where you'd have the big feature at the top and then all the reviews on the rest of the page, did that balance or article types change while you were there, so were you seeing more or less previews for example? (31m43)

There were definitely, and there always have been previews, it's absolute nonsense to say that there weren't previews. I've been doing some work which has involved me reading stuff from the 1900s and you'd get an interview about Strauss talking about Salome or something, that kind of thing, it was just written in a much drier way and with not quite so much pizzazz and celebrity feel about it. But the idea of a composer or an artist talking about what they do has existed as long as newspapers. But definitely the balance of preview material was changing and at that time. Certainly Tom Sutcliffe, the Arts Editor, was very resistant to being driven entirely by PR, if we wanted to do something we liked to think that we'd chosen to do it because we thought it was interesting rather than because a well known PR had rung us up but it wasn't entirely, of course we needed them as much as they needed us, but I think the wholesale sense of there being zillions of PRs out there all jostling to get their piece in the paper and everybody queuing in turn I don't think that was as much.

That came later did it? In the 1990s?

No, I suppose it was the late 80s wasn't it. I think it was happening, it was increasing. I can remember there were maybe four or five music PRs who had the main ground cut out between them, most of whom are still at it, but now there are a load of others because the world's changed.

So it was starting to shift towards the end of that period, more PR's contacting you?

Yes. It was always happening but it didn't seem to be as widespread. You could have a good idea about music and that would be a basis for a feature and you might on another day have an interview, but now it's much harder to get the idea in, it's easier to get the interview. I think there was a resistance towards personality stuff, even if somebody seemed to be interesting and the ground was established and you could do an interview with them. Whereas now, I write for *The Evening Standard* they really only want people who are already endorsed, they're not so confident of saying 'we think this person is interesting and we think our writer will make it interesting for you, just believe us'. They're more 'who else is doing this interview, nobody, why not? They can't be interesting then'.

So they were more willing to break new ground, you could stick your neck out then?

Yes. (35m25)

I'd like to ask you about this notion of whether or not there has been a golden age of music criticism and whether or not things have or haven't declined. Several authors, academics and several rock music critics as well, particularly those from the specialist music press, have moaned about the fact that they think there has been a decline in the quality of music criticism. I just wonder if you think that is the case just generally, across all genres, or specific to classical music, either in just the broadsheets or wider. Any sense of decline? (36m07)

Well I think the squeezing of it has been very, very conspicuous in the last five to eight years probably. The loss of a belief that the event is important for itself as I was saying and the tendency to think it's important only if it serves a future purpose. That is still not entirely the case because *The Guardian*, and to some extent *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Evening Standard*, will review things that are just very worthwhile events. But the percentage that's covered is much, much smaller than it used to be, things are assumed to be much more dispensable or disposable in terms of there's not the same need to think 'we've got to be there and we've got to cover this' there's a slightly more sort of 'oh well we can't, we haven't got the space'.

You might be interested in the fact that, this is *BBC Music Magazine* (looking at example). This was what I did after *The Independent*, has just announced (The Michael Oliver Memorial Prize for classical writers under 25). It is true that a lot of the main critics were young critics about that time and they're still doing it and there's definitely a shortage of younger writers coming up. There could be lots of reasons for that and there is an argument to say that actually the thing about criticism is that being young is not necessarily the way to convince the reader that you have got a right to have a view on something, and I didn't do criticism at that stage because I didn't feel I'd done my apprenticeship. Only when you've got more seasoned do you have the richer voice, I mean people might disagree with you, to say what was good or what was of value about something. I think the fact that now there's a lot more blogging will give a different kind of vitality to people writing about music and it's a very, very small closed shop and it's very difficult to get into and there are very few places to do it, it's an incredibly small clique, I'm not talking about rock and pop because I don't really know that world as well, but you do have to sort of earn your colours to write and probably then there was more chance to experiment with other writers than now, when there just isn't the space. If you've got one music review (and) you've got some senior writer on contract who you've paid for their work the idea of saying 'we're not going to use you for this event we're going to just try out this young hopeful and pay them as well', the economics of it don't work.

When would you say all of that started to shift? Or was there a key moment after which things started to shift? (40m)

I think actually after about, I think in the last five years or so. [Further comments off the record] It's almost instinctive, one knows the kind of people who would be right to do it and you can't just pluck somebody out because it's not like being a columnist where you can just be really obnoxious and you're nineteen and it's fun, there is a weight of, just the body of knowledge and the experience of being able to put things in context. It's a very long, hard, slow journey. In answer to your question 'has it changed?' I don't know, I think these things just go in waves. At the moment there's a whole wave of writers either side of fifty who've been doing it for maybe fifteen to twenty years who are still doing it well but they had a chance to cut their teeth at a time when maybe they were writing for papers

where there were four or five critics and they were number five and they gradually got more and more confident and they worked their way into being able to be a Chief Music Critic. It's much harder (now), it doesn't work that way because there isn't that kind of flexibility. Certainly in those early days of *The Independent*, I did try one or two people who weren't good, and I wouldn't claim one person that I'd sort of nurtured, but there was a chance to try out different voices and it wasn't the end of the world if they went to a Wigmore Hall concert and it wasn't a great review, you just wouldn't necessarily use them again. But newspapers are dying, maybe we've had our golden era and there cannot be another because newspapers will never give that space to music coverage again. (42m49)

And you think that's more recent than perhaps this period?

Yes that's not in this period. Though I think the seeds were there because everybody was very envious that *The Independent* had such good music coverage and although it's ebbed and flowed in the years since, both at *The Independent* and at other newspapers, it depends on whether or not you've got an Arts Editor that's interested. *The Guardian's* got an Editor now that's fantastically interested in music and there's wonderful coverage but what happens when that Editor goes? It's a fickle business. (43m30)

It's a sort of summary question, but in your view how did music criticism in the English broadsheet press change during that period 1981 - 1991, I know we've touched upon some of these things already but if you could summarise into a summary statement?

I know one thing in all this is there was probably a proliferation of the number of events.

That were covered in the papers?

Not that were covered in the papers, that were taking place. I could have chosen from twenty events in London per night, in large and small venues obviously, if you think of The Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall, Barbican and then a whole load of smaller places and a lot of things in the regions too. There was always a pressure on space and I would say that by the end of the time I was at *The Independent* the squeeze was starting, and it wasn't anybody or any one single thing it was just a general movement towards other art forms taking priority, visual arts becoming very, very fashionable which hadn't really happened before. This was definitely a time when the visual arts stopped being the kind of Cinderella, which seems extraordinary, leading up to the whole Charles Saatchi kind of explosion in the early to mid 1990s. There wasn't really a musical equivalent but one thing we haven't talked about is The Three Tenors, (they) changed everything.

OK, I'd be interested to hear about that.

The Three Tenors was 1990, that absolutely I would say transformed... and we've never really, we can't undo, we can't go back to pre-that time with The Three Tenors. The idea of classical music being popular had not occurred, that's really important, that's very, very important. Classical music wasn't even called classical music, it was just accepted that it had a weighty importance that you tried to make as lively and interesting because you cared about it. But the minute The Three Tenors happened it became commercial, or it had commercial potential. It had, you know, the birth of the CD and a whole different way of selling classical music, and that's really crucial. Ofrah Harnoy, a cellist, I don't know what year Vanessa Mae started, when she did her naked sort of wet T-shirt advertising, but it all happened around the same time, probably two or three years after we're talking about, but early 1990s. But Ofrah Harnoy was definitely during my time at *The Independent*, I've never heard anything about her since, but she had a marketing campaign that showed her with a, it wasn't too exciting, but an off the shoulder sexy dress and was on the tubes and that kind of place which caused, it's not that it caused prurient stir it's just that it had never happened before in classical music, people just didn't try to sell classical music in the same sort of way, they sold it by saying 'Beethoven, the symphonies' not 'Ofrah Harnoy, the cellist' and that was a definite turning point. The Three Tenors was the most, which came a little bit later if my chronology is right which it may not be, that absolutely catapulted the idea of music being a popular or potentially a market grabber and off the back of that I was asked to found *BBC Music Magazine*, specifically because the BBC thought 'Three Tenors, total new audience for classical music' and it was also what spawned Classic FM, and they happened just after. *BBC Music Magazine* started in September 1992, and Classic FM started (shortly after) and it was really the end of an era. It was the beginning of the division between an old way of very straight forward, quite intellectually based coverage of music where you could talk about quite serious things that you'd try to make popular but essentially you were expecting people to find their way in, whereas this whole new world of discovery, which actually divided audiences yet again because there were the people who did only want *Nessun Dorma* and the people who did only want a hour of a Bruckner symphony and somehow the twain had to try and meet in new publications like

this. So those years in *The Independent* were really a lead up to that. I think that absolutely changed the whole of music journalism. The death of *The Listener* magazine, which was then considered the popular intelligent, it wasn't only about music, but it was considered the lighter end of writing seriously about music. It was for an intelligent readership. But when you look at it now, if you find an old copy of it, lighter end meant 1000 words on the new Luigi Nono piece but written in a way that wasn't for a musicological quarterly. But that was considered too stuffy by the BBC who axed it, they wanted a glossy magazine. (52m)

And I guess this is also a result of Wapping, with the print technology changes?

Exactly, so it was a very pivotal time. *The Independent* wasn't really part of that because it was still taking music in that sense in an old fashioned sort of quite serious way, it was just trying to let fresh air into the way it covered it, but it wasn't caught up in this need to popularise everything and need to be accessible. But *The Independent* was of course done on the new technology, it didn't entirely make a difference at that stage because it was still quite (basic) by today's standards.

I've heard about this shift and the need to make music criticism more accessible to the wider audience. I think that was an absolute turning point though and it's really important to see that the period you're covering was absolutely teetering on a whole new way of dealing with classical music, which by then had to be called 'classical music'. (53m27)

So that shift towards a more commercial approach?

Or a more commercially aware approach because I would say that the people writing about music didn't necessarily want to go down that route but knew that their paymasters were demanding it. So everybody was resisting it but having to go along with it. And Nigel Kennedy was part of that as well. (53m54)

... (Part B) ...

And at the outset, with the newspaper starting, I guess that the whole philosophy of *The Independent* would have been explained to them (the contributing journalists)?

Yes. I think it was really just looking for good writing, obviously musically informed good writing, but that was the basis on which people were chosen. I think that Bayan was a class apart in a sense because there's a pedagogic approach, he wanted to teach people. I think he began as a teacher and he did an English degree. Now neither of those things need matter but he very much thought, it was almost a little lecture each week 'I'm going to tell you about Stravinsky', very much in the tradition of Hans Keller, his great sort of God, a very high intellectual level which expected people to keep up. We commissioned a picture each week for Bayan from someone called Michael Daly who created a wonderful series of graphics, quite strange. He did it every single week on whatever Bayan wrote about, so by Wednesday we'd know what Bayan was doing on Saturday and he'd come with these sort of dirty pixilated, black and white, Elgar and some sort of, his masters voice horn in the corner or whatever it was. Michael Daly would probably be worth having a ten minute phone conversation with because he did do them for years, I don't know how many, right through the time I was there. So it was almost like a counterpoint in Bayan's piece to have this Michael Daly image.

And if *The Independent* was so keen on having good pictures I guess it was a crucial part of the page? Yes, and to commission a drawing every week. (1h05m36)

Were the other broadsheets doing that or was that something different?

Yes it was different and that was part of the ethos, not just to have photographs. I think some weeks we did use a brilliant photograph as I said but most weeks it was Michael Daley.

So another way of setting *The Independent* apart from the other broadsheets?

Yes and that was a very classy thing. It was like a very smart shop but not one that doesn't expect everybody to feel happy to go into it, we're not talking Harrods we're talking something much more wacky, because it was very quirky, very independent minded. (1h06m25)

So you said that the whole approach of the paper was to make serious music interesting and trying to open a door to a whole new world with this liberal minded attitude.

That it wasn't stuffy, that it derived from people's passions. I think the music took priority not the performers, though the performers may have determined what was covered because that was life. If

you'd got Daniel Barenboim coming and playing all the Beethoven sonatas that was an event, so you'd want to cover it. (1h07m15)

Is there anything else that you think I've missed or that I should have asked about? Anything that you think I've overlooked? (1h09m30)

The Saturday music page, the elements within it were I think there was usually Bayan's piece, maybe a couple of reviews, and then we had a kind of diary that usually I wrote, not always, but that hadn't really been done before. I think all these things that now happen automatically, it was really just like adding fresh seasoning to something that was already being done but nobody had really looked at it and thought 'is there a way would could turn it upside down a bit and make it a bit more lively?' So I don't want to claim that we were reinventing the wheel, or inventing it, but just that we were perhaps alert to... I did a lot of interviews with living composers, I mean lots, that wouldn't really have been taken that, wouldn't really have been thought... I did Berio, I did La Monte Young and I did Menotti, he wrote *The Night Visitors*, the most performed opera ever written apparently, and I did Boulez, I did Xenakis. To have an interview with Xenakis was quite something in a daily broadsheet paper. You didn't have to convince the Editor or the Arts Editor that they were worthwhile. You had to fight for your space and you obviously had to make your case, but it wasn't an uphill struggle. If there was space available it was considered interesting. Nigel Osborne, Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davis.

And they welcomed that?

Yes, they thought 'it's interesting, it's new'. (1h12m20)

OK, I'll have a look at the contemporary music coverage in *The Independent*.

I've probably got my cuttings file somewhere, but I'm not sure I can lay my hands on it. (1h12m42 – 1h14m18)

(having retrieved some old copies of *The Independent*)

I can't see my cuttings folder from that time but I have found some papers. I knew they'd come in useful sometime. I'll just see what I've kept, I don't know what I've kept but. To get all that space just seems amazing, and two music reviews. I mean to have a picture of Haydn just to say 'Haydn' (1h14m48)

There's two music ones again, it was just every day. But then there wasn't much advertising. (1h15m52)

That surprises me I though there would be more, with it being a new newspaper.

I suppose the circulation didn't make them attractive to the advertisers for a long time. (1h16m03)

So I got all that space, and a review, that's amazing. (1h16m54)

And this was all due to the Editor's willingness to accept so much music coverage? (1h17m14)

I think he wanted it there, so it was an open door. It wasn't that he said 'there's got to be this number of pieces', it filtered down that he wanted proper music coverage so it was expected that his newspaper would have it, which was glorious. (1h17m37)

I forget the details now but wasn't there a change in ownership a few years after *The Independent* began and I wondered if that had had an effect on music criticism?

That was after I left. I don't think it would've affected music in particular, it would be arts coverage in general. (1h18m03)

(1h18m44) Three music reviews, and all about 550 words. If I get a music review now that's longer than 400 words, well I don't, 400 words is maximum. I've just written a 400 word one of two operas.

Do you find that is really limiting in terms of how serious you can be? (1h19m14)

Well, you can only say one thing.

I've heard people talk about 'think pieces', these long extended essays, and how they deteriorated and declined.

Yes I suppose think pieces are what we had, Bayan's pieces were think pieces. (1h19m34)

They really do show the layout, with the big article at the top.

Yes and there was no fear. Now the idea of having, though there are other photos on the page, but one big picture was what you really aimed at. Whereas now it's much more bitty. (1h20m24)

All these arts pages. A luxury, but we just didn't realise it was a luxury at the time. (1h21m06)

Rock at the top of the page (1h21m21)

That was a review, yes that probably did happen slightly more than it happened with classical music. A whole rock page, that was a first, nobody had had a rock page before. (1h21m43)

The big Saturday paper was very much an *Independent* thing that all the other papers have followed since. (1h22m27)

So actually advertising the arts pages on the front cover? (1h23m30)

Yes they often did, but there was less visual screaming in newspapers.

But at the time quite different?

Yes, I think that probably *The Independent* was the first to do that with any great deal of regularity (1h23m57)

**Transforming Music Criticism? An Examination of Changes in Music
Journalism in the English Broadsheet Press from 1981 to 1991.**

Jennifer Skellington

Oxford Brookes University

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Volume 3 of 3

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Interview with Bayan Northcott
At his home in Chiswick, London. 4th September 2006

Part A

If I could just get some of my basic facts right from the start, am I right in thinking that you were hired by *The Independent* as the Chief Music Critic right from its outset? (0m47)

Yes, well I was hired before it began. I should perhaps explain that I had just been sacked from *The Sunday Telegraph*. *The Sunday Telegraph* which I'd worked for for ten years as their Chief Critic, or their only critic, I had a column every week, had a Features Editor, but it had no Arts Editor and one was told, 'well you've got 1000 words this week' and providing one turned up on Friday morning with one's copy one was left completely free to cover what one thought was important. If one went back in the afternoon the proofs were there, they'd come up from the stone, the print shop, which was under the offices that were in Fleet Street and you would then find (out) what the space actually was because advertisements would still have been coming in that day, and you would then cut the galley to fit the space and re-word and so forth. It was still set with hot metal, can you believe it, linotype machines, this is still in the early 1980s, you would go down to the print shop and there were these printers sitting at these antique machines with their little pots of boiling lead and each line of the text was cast as a lead slide and they were fitted in boxes and the galley was drawn off this as they'd been printing papers for decades. So one developed extraordinary skills because if you had to lose seventeen lines you got very good at extracting adjectives from near the end of paragraphs so the fewest number of slides had to be re-cast. Of course once computer setting came in this was a totally useless skill but this was something that we got to a fine art for a time. Anyway, they had this Features Editor and they finally decided they were so out of date they ought to have an Arts Editor and they appointed somebody who fancied himself as an opera reviewer, I won't say who it was, and when I made mild remarks that I'd actually been doing this acceptably I thought for ten years he got the Editor to sack me, which didn't worry me unduly because ten years at *The Sunday Telegraph* was quite enough, I didn't feel entirely at home there, it was a right wing paper and I was basically a left wing person.

But they did me a very good turn because just at that point *The Independent* was about to be founded. Now *The Independent*, as you doubtless know, was the first quality paper that anybody had attempted to found in London as a national paper for decades, all previous attempts had failed completely. The man founding it, the ring leader, was Andreas Whittam Smith (who) was in fact the Chief Financial Correspondent of *The Telegraph*. He got together with some groups, went to the city and raised capital and decided to found a classical quality daily paper based on more or less European, the best Italian and German papers, more than England, because this was at a time in which the Murdoch press was really driving the standards down, it was very poor, and he was a very high-minded man who wanted to raise standards of journalism again, the *New York Times*, that sort of thing, that was the idea. As you probably know, when a paper is going to be founded they run dummy issues for months before the thing actually hits the street. Another thing they wanted to do was use all the latest technology. So I was rung up within weeks of leaving *The Telegraph* by the then Arts Editor who was Miriam Gross, the wife of John Gross who in fact resigned, I don't know why, before the paper ever actually appeared. But she rang me up and said 'would I be interested?' and I said like anything 'it couldn't be more opportune'. So I really began by writing dummy reviews and in those days of course this is really before computers and PCs were ubiquitous, a few very go-ahead critics and writers were using little Tandys and little modems which were very simple devices that you clamped to a telephone mouthpiece and they had little typewriters built in, but you could only see one line at a time and things like that, and I thought I can't be dealing with this. So in those days you would type your piece and they would send a biker to get it, and back to City Road where the paper had its offices in the city of London, and this went on for some time. Anyway the paper finally came out, October 8th I think was the first issue in 1986, and I was the Chief Critic and Michael John White was the second on the paper. They had a Music Editor as well as an Arts Editor. Now the Music Editor was a man called Thomas Sutcliffe who is still the Television Critic of *The Independent* now. He had a vision of the arts page as being written by what he called Renaissance men, he wanted highly cultivated people who would be capable one day of writing an architectural review and the next day of reviewing an opera and so on. It was a very nice idea but of course it didn't work out at all, he soon found that you needed specialists in these various subjects and so gradually it turned into an arts page like the other London papers with classical critics and theatre critics and film critics and so forth. But this sort of Renaissance man idea lingered for six months or a year or so, so that you did get people

like Stephen Gains and so on, reviewing Michael Newman operas, he was an architectural correspondent, all that kind of thing, for a time and it was tried. The Music Editor was Fiona Maddocks with whom I got on extremely well and it was all rather exiting because in a sense within the limitations, and there wasn't much space to start with, the paper was a single fold broadsheet, with no supplements or anything like that. I mean nobody knew whether this thing would sink or swim, it was a huge risk, it could have gone under in six months if it hadn't picked up readers and advertising and made people sit up. So there was this sort of sense of togetherness and pioneering and there we were planning the music policy and talking nearly every day about what needed to be covered and so on and it was all very enjoyable, particularly for me because I got there and I went into the arts part of the office, it was a huge open plan office of course there, and I was suddenly aware, I was 46 then, that I was easily the oldest person there, and whereas I'd been treated as a sort of young, sort of nobody for years and years and years at *The Telegraph*, which was mostly staffed by people who seemed to be over 90, I was suddenly a senior figure and was treated as such and I found this very flattering, however that's beside the point. But anyway this was very nice. (9m24)

One of the other good things was that Whittam Smith himself, the Editor, who was very acceptable, one could talk to him, was in fact seriously interested in music. He went to Covent Garden, I'm told he was an accomplished pianist, I never heard him play or anything, but he obviously took an interest in the music coverage and would occasionally comment. You know, I'd run into him in the corridor if I happened to be there and he'd say 'I have to say I didn't agree at all with what you wrote about Covent Garden, Figaro, but (name of individual not clear on recording, possibly 'Lloyd Droydus') agreed with every word you said' or something like that, and it was rather nice. One of the few newspaper proprietors, a vanished breed now I have to say, I think the only Fleet Street, I say 'Fleet Street' in inverted commas of course now, the only Editor who still takes an interest in classical music is the man on *The Guardian*, whose name again, I'm very bad about names, it'll come back to me in a minute, but he has some interest in this. I've got to be careful not to libellous here, but on the whole one doesn't find it in the higher (positions), some of them might go to the opera but one suspects it is for social reasons because opera is supposed to be sexy and they've all heard of Pavarotti, but that's as far as it goes. Anyway, that's how it went and for the first year or so, it was quite exciting. (11m17)

Now I'm getting your questions mixed up a little here but I need to as I need to unfold this history. The technology; after a bit it became clear that the paper couldn't afford to send motorbikes and bikers out to all corners of London for all their correspondents and critics and so forth, this was very expensive. So there were really two ways of getting copy into the paper, either one resorted to using computers which of course were getting better all the time, which I'm afraid I resisted for a long time. I didn't get that (PC) until 2001. Before that, at first one typed and it was collected, then I discovered that the paper also had a whole room full of Copytakers. I mean in the past fast reports always had to come this way, they were phoned through, you know sports reporters, someone who was at a football match who wanted to phone the result straight in would phone a Copytaker who would sit with his ear piece on and literally tap it into the system by ear. And these men were incredibly skilful and fast. I could dictate a 1200 word article in under half an hour, and know that if I was fairly careful and fairly clear that it would be pretty clean. There were some sounds, one got quickly to learn that M's and N's are very easily confused over the phone for example so one would say M for mother and N for nuts, and you had to be very careful with homonyms, you know two words that sounded the same, and prescribe which one it was or you could get some absurdities. Occasionally, I mean sometimes things still did get through and I've got a whole file there of all my early articles which I would always correct as soon as I snipped them out in the paper just so I at least had some record of what I really meant. Then of course the text in whatever form would go up to the Editorial Department and would be subbed, and that could be another series of hurdles to get over. I have mixed feelings about the whole Sub-editorial profession, if one calls it that, because you never know who's doing it, whether it's a sort of general Sub who is more used to subbing football reports or whatever, or whether it's an Arts Sub which on the whole it should be and usually is. Very occasionally you come across, and I've had experience of this, one of those Subs who is really a frustrated writer who practices his frustrations on your piece by re-writing it and one has to fire in a rude little note to the Arts Editor saying 'look I thought this alteration was quite unwarranted and can you please see that it doesn't happen again', and so forth or they would correct punctuation and so on. I say I have mixed feelings because my spelling is naturally not 100%, it never has been, I don't know why, I mean I've got an English degree but even so. I always say that it was reading Chaucer in the original that did it, but I'm afraid it was bad before that. So I'm very glad about spell checks on computers which has saved my bacon, because I never see my mistakes on the screen, it's very difficult, I don't know why. So occasionally they would save one from embarrassment and so on.

Now that went on for quite some time into the 1990s and then of course in various subliminal ways the fact that you are writing a piece that is going to be dictated was going to affect the style although I couldn't easily put my finger upon how it would do so. I mean I was quite used to dictating in the sense that I'd done a lot of BBC work since the 1970s and in those days up to the late 1980s or early 1990 everything was of course scripted so you had to read through a script. It's only since then that speaking off the top of your head has become more or less the norm. You had to learn how to write a script, not make it too literary and then deliver it as though it were natural. That again was a sort of art in its own right and in some ways the fact that more stuff isn't scripted now I think is a loss because you get an awful lot of loose approximate talk now which is not as helpful as it might be. I'm talking about radio now.

That's interesting, that the way you wrote was possibly influenced by the fact that you knew you'd got to dictate it.

Well I would think so, I mean there were famous mishearings, some people kept books of these things. The classic one I remember, my dear friend Tony Payne, the man who finished Elgar's *Third Symphony*, once had to review some piece by the Welsh composer Alan Hoddinott, London Sinfonietta which was called 'Ritornelli', the Italian for repeat, for trombone and seven instruments and it came out as 'Little Nelly'. I mean these things did happen from time to time, and they were wonderful howlers and they were passed around Fleet Street pubs and things, in which I spent some time. Yes El Vino's even, a *Private Eye* favourite, was still going strong then and full of dreadful old soaks, journalists and so forth. There's not a newspaper left in Fleet Street now, I think *The Telegraph* building is an Iranian bank or something like that.

I should say by the way, just to back track, no let me just complete the technology. About the middle of the 1990s, if I remember rightly, there was some pressure to reduce the number of Copytakers, I mean these were all men, highly skilled and earning big salaries. They were very good, they knew how to spell all the composers' names, you didn't necessarily need to spell them. I remember the Chief Sub was an extraordinary man and I used to have long chats with him because he was very interested in music and my first encounter with him was in fact back on *The Telegraph*, I'd reviewed a concert of rather obscure French baroque church music and at the end of it he said 'excuse me Sir, but doesn't the latest research suggest that it wasn't Lalande but Delalande?'. Anyway it was that very man who became the Chief Sub at *The Independent* and very good he was. He took a real interest in the pieces as one was dictating them you know, he would comment on them afterwards and so on which was nice. So after that I went back to typing and faxing and that was some extraordinary rigmarole because they were now working with computer setting so it had to be faxed to somewhere in Yorkshire which converted the typescript into computer script which was then beamed back to London onto the page for the Subs to look at and so on. It was very, very cumbersome. Finally I gave in, in 2001 and bought myself a computer and with much swearing and cursing, learned the rudiments over the next six months although I think computers are from a Manichaeian world, they create as much chaos and evil as they do good so to speak. You lose some and you gain some. From my point of view, I'm only a one finger typist, I never learned to type, but I can go very fast with some inaccuracies but one can correct afterwards. That has certainly affected my writing style. It's loosened up. I don't think it's got less concentrated because one is always aware that one is desperately short of space and one's got to say as much as one can get into some tiny patch as essentially as possible. So it isn't a case of the word processor running away with you, which it does have that effect on some people, they sort of rattle off. I've never understood the mentality of writers who say 'it's much easier to write 10,000 words than to write 1,000'. My best subject in English in school was précis, which nobody teaches anymore, and I think that's a terrible mistake because that taught me to think more than anything else. You really have to work out what's absolutely essential here and what's secondary. If I ran a school of journalism I would force them all to do that daily, like composers should write a canon every day or a Bach chorale everyday or something, because it's absolutely basic and particularly now when there's so little space for so-called classical coverage of any kind, certainly for serious coverage anyway, they're puff pieces and so on, that's different. (22m34)

So you said it has loosened up your style?

It has enabled me to write more spontaneously yes. These days I go to a concert, I had to do two Proms this weekend, the two Berlin Philharmonic Proms with Simon Rattle, and copy is in at 10.15am the next morning and one is notionally supposed to write 500 words but they never print more than about 360, it's always cut. So what I always do is write a 360 word piece and then add lots of inessential sentences and put brackets round with a note at the end saying 'these are optional cuts' to

the Sub, which they then take. It's the only way. So at least you can sort of protect the essence of what you're saying. But when you've got to do two very, very interesting concerts in that time and space, I could have written 1000 words on some of the individual pieces, it's very, very soul destroying to only be able to do that. I will have my breakfast, and I'll come in here at 8am and that piece will be done by 9.30am and I'll tweak it a bit and fiddle around with it and put it through the spell check and print it off and make sure there are no other things I haven't noticed and then send it off, so it's usually in by about 9.45am. And then the day is before one, quick cup of coffee and then one can get on with what one's really got to do. So it's not arduous. (24m15)

(Break for refreshment)

I think it's probably worth saying that I think there have been various systems of paying, critics, reviewers, music correspondents whatever you want to call them over the years. In the post war days of the 1950s and 1960s and so on, the Chief Music Critic would've been a staff member of the paper and would be paid a full time salary so people like Desmond Shawe-Taylor on *The Sunday Times* and Peter Heyworth on *The Observer* and Edward Greenfield on *The Guardian* and the man at *The Telegraph*, Cooper, I've forgotten his Christian name, but anyway, they would've been on the staff and so forth. Others would possibly have been retained, I don't think any critics now are on the staff of the paper at all unless they happen to be Arts Editors, somebody like Richard Morrison on *The Times*, who's been the Arts Editor, I'm not sure if he is at the moment, would be a full paid member of staff but on the whole the papers then took to retaining, you would be paid a retainer. When I went to *The Sunday Telegraph* which was 1976, I succeeded Jeremy Noble, one only had for that to produce as it were one piece of copy per week, on Friday, which would be about 800 to 1000 words but of course one had to spend a lot of time getting around because one was covering the entire music of Britain.

I mean I spent a lot of the late 1970s and early 1980s on British Rail trains whizzing up to Glasgow for Scottish Opera or Leeds for Opera North or Cardiff for Welsh National Opera or down to Glyndebourne, or wherever. I seemed to be incessantly in motion, staying in overnight hotels and so on. One of the good things about the papers in those days, certainly *The Telegraph* which was very old fashioned, it didn't pay much, I think I was paid a £3,500 retainer in 1976 which was worth quite a bit more than it is now because inflation really got going about then. But they insisted that their correspondents and critics all travelled first class. So what one would do, I would go to the Features Editor and say 'The Paris Opera next week, the first ever complete production of Alban Berg's *Lulu*, a very important historical thing is happening and I think we should cover it', and he would sort of say 'well boy if you think it's important off you go'. I would go down to the entrance hall of *The Telegraph*, I would claim my travel warrants, I would book a hotel in Paris and I would swan off to Paris and back on *Telegraph* travel warrants and so on, and a few weeks later I would collect my expenses from the hall and that would be that, and it was all first class. You'll never get anything like that now. (28m35)

So that was at *The Telegraph*?

That was at *The Telegraph* which I was on from 1976 to 1986. On *The Independent*, they had a different idea. They wanted to cut down travel as much as possible and the idea was rather to have a sort resident correspondent, so for example if there was a new opera production in Cardiff, they would ask as a one off, Stephen Walsh, who was working at Cardiff University then and who had been Peter Heyworth's second on *The Observer* for many years and then went into academic life, he's just delivered his definitive biography of Stravinsky, which I've got up there in two massive volumes, and very thorough it is too. He would do the Cardiff what not, and Julian Rushton who was Professor of Music at Leeds would do our operas from Opera North and so forth. So this was one of the ways of saving on travel expenses to some extent and basically I was more or less based in London from then on and it was all just going up to town by tube which suited me fine, I'd had enough of ten years of British Rail. Now *The Independent* offered a retainer, it wasn't a full time retainer because that would've constituted staff as it were. I think I was retained for something like two reviews a week with the occasional feature or something like that, I forget the exact terms now, I'd have to dig out the contract for that. In a sense the retainer has remained but as my workload for them has been, I converted this after a bit because I got fed up with the reviewing and said I would rather write a weekly feature which are the longer pieces that start in 1988 and go through and in fact they went through 'till two years ago. Firstly they were weekly and they nearly killed me actually, then I said 'I can't keep this up, I'll do them fortnightly' so the retainer was readjusted appropriately. And then they ran into financial trouble and had to cut expenses right left and centre so they said 'do you mind

just doing one a month?' which by then I didn't mind because you know I was doing a lot of other stuff, radio work and book reviews for specialist publications, the *Musical Times*, all this sort of thing, one is scribbling something all the time. And that's how it stayed until 2001 or 2002 when I began to take on some nightly reviewing as well on the paper after all which was paid by the piece. It wasn't part of a retainer, it was extra, until the current Arts Editor came in who for whatever reason, whether it was his own view or whether people higher up the paper thought that the writing was too esoteric or so on, he basically discouraged and stopped me writing features. I saw the writing on the wall and thought right and went to him and said 'well look if you don't want features anymore', he never said why but he's not that sort of person, 'then can we renegotiate what's left of my retainer?', because it had been subdivided because I'd written less, and convert it to three guaranteed reviews a month just so that I knew I'd have something coming in regularly each month, which he agreed to and then forgot and then tried to do away with the retainer, but fortunately I was able to remind him that he had agreed to this. So that's the situation at the moment, so literally I write three postage stamps a month, I think it's a waste of me but that's what they want, so there we are.

So that's with the new editor?

That's the current Arts Editor.

Do you know when that was from?

This came about, it was really spring last year. I think the last feature I wrote for them was on Walton's First Symphony which was March 2005. I did write two other features after that: one on Judith Weir, which eventually appeared very late and cut in half, and one on Haydn Quartets because the Lindsay Quartet were doing a series, which was never printed. I offered to do one or two more after that and he didn't even reply. I mean, I'm sorry I think it's deplorable, but there we are, this is Fleet Street and it doesn't surprise me in the least. I'm coming up to retirement, I'm 66 now and in a way if I took my state pension and my miserable and residual private pension scheme I could just about get by on those. But I like to write and I like to go to things and I think I've still got stuff to offer but there we are.

That's the general background, and I started really on *The Independent* when you come in, which is October 1986, writing short reviews, the sort I'm writing now, and then from I think it was October 1988 I started writing regular features.

I'm really pleased you've said that because I had to estimate the number of words in each article and I did notice that you suddenly doubled the number of words.

Well I did write a few features before that of various sorts, but that's when it became a regular thing. Fiona Maddocks and Thomas Sutcliffe and I agreed that was making the best use of what I was able to do. They averaged 1200 words those features, and of those there must be something like 300 over the late 1980s through the 1990s into the 2000s, and on more than one occasion it's been put to me that my anthology should be published or a book. I could sort of turn them almost into a virtual history of Western music because they go back. My musical interests go right back to a lot of early music, I'm very interested in early music and I'm influenced by early music a lot. But I started as a 20th century specialist but my real heart is in Haydn and Schubert and so on so it's pretty wide really. I can give Vivaldi a miss, and I'm not a great Chopin fan, you know there are deaf spots but I don't write about them.

So that shift, was that something that just applied to you, this shift from writing shorter reviews to longer features, or was it something that the Arts or Music Editor applied to all the Music Critics, was it an arts page decision?

I think I was the only person who had this sort of regular spot and it was partly because it's what I was asked to do and what they agreed I was best at doing. I mean the Drama Critic would write a big feature on an actor or something every now then but it wasn't a regular slot. (36m54)

So it wasn't *The Independent* driving this?

No, and it stood out then because none of the other papers were doing that. I mean the Sundays had a big review but it wasn't usually a feature it was a sort of round up of the week, it might concentrate on one or two events, but it wasn't usually, as it were, a topic which was not even necessarily anchored to any specific event. I mean it might be a centenary of a composer or it might be suddenly noticing a number of works for a particular instrument so I would write a feature about the characteristics of that instrument or something or there might be a Japanese season coming up somewhere so I would write a piece about the impact of Japanese art and music in general on Western taste with a particular focus

on music. It was that sort of thing. It was left very much to me, I mean I would phone in and say 'I thought I'd do this, what do you think?', and there was an additional pleasure actually attached to this because these things were very nicely presented, this was in the days when there was the space. I mean one of the things we've lost with the switch to the tabloid format is the sort of the handsome layout you got on some of those pages. I mean for a time the music feature was the dominant thing of the arts page on Saturdays'. It ran on Saturdays and it was a very, very sort of privileged spot and I felt rather proud of this and I think I put some of the best of my writing into those pieces.

And they were always illustrated. Now they might be with photographs and so on in which case I would discuss with the Music Editor and so on, but very often they were illustrated with a drawing usually by Michael Daley who was the sort of regular illustrator of the paper. The paper had a lot of graphic work then in the late 1980s and early 1990 so I would ring him up, often before I'd written the piece and say 'what I'm going to write about is such and such' and he would come up with a sort of design, often very ingenious and very decorate and extremely skilful, and we had a nice relationship over this and I really enjoyed this, it was a sort of extra dimension to the thing.

Was that something that increased – the size, or did the number of illustrations increase with time? Or was it something that started at the very beginning?

They set great store on the paper looking handsome and distinctive. I think that's true to say. (Break – referring to hard copies of pieces from July 1986 to December 1991, and the first edition of *The Independent*). There it is, there we are, and that was the first. I remember that day very well because the evening of the day the paper came out I had to go to Westminster Cathedral for the first British performance of an enormous new organ cycle by Olivier Messiaen and I found myself sitting two yards away from him, this great French master and his wife sitting there with his score and this tumultuous rampaged sort or roaring from the far end of the Cathedral, so it was quite a memorable day. That's right it was a Britten Tippett Festival.

Well that wasn't particularly graphic. But Daley was very good, there were others too. There was Wheeler who was a very, very funny draftsman who did some lovely ones. (Looking at some hard copies of articles). It should say Daley there. That looks like a Wheeler, ah you've got that one, I'm sure that's Wheeler, why doesn't it say that, it should do? Well that's a Daley you see, oh that's right, that's the musical dice game one, well there is a classic misprint, that's a mishearing. Musikalisches Würfelspiel, 'Musical Dice Game', that's the German, and for some reason the first time I dictated it the Copytaker didn't get the 'e' in 'spiel' so it comes out throughout as Musikalisches Würfelspil', and in fact I think I added a sentence at the end of my next what not saying this was a slip because anybody who spoke German got it wrong.

So they wanted right from the very beginning to have a very distinctive image?

Oh yes, there was a great deal of discussion about the design and the type, and all that I think was going on.

So what you wrote about wasn't determined by how good a picture they could get, it was led by you?

No, no, no, no. It was led by me. I mean sometimes you'd just get a photograph, you know an archive photograph, Britten and Pears because I was writing about the first edition of Britten letters, that sort of thing.

So you were given a really free hand in terms of what you wrote about at *The Independent*?

Yes, yes. Well I would ring up and sort of say 'I thought this, how about it?' and I don't remember anybody saying 'no, no we'd rather you didn't do that'. Here's an article I wrote about child prodigies with photographs. Young Mahler and the infant Liszt and so forth. There's one about Brahms and Clara Schumann and there's photographs of all three of them, it's quite a spread.

And I wondered if they chose to use these pictures or have such emphasis on pictures was to really differentiate themselves from *The Times* and *The Guardian*? (44m49)

I think the whole idea, what was the phrase Andreas Whittam Smith used, a classical something daily, I mean he had very, very definite views as to the whole ethos of the paper, to be very, very high-minded. One of the things that was absolutely rigorously instilled at first was that none of his journalists were to accept freebies. If they were going to go abroad to festivals and so on the paper would pay because freebies would affect their judgement, you know, it was as high-minded as that. Of course over the years this gradually got worn away. I mean the real problem with *The Independent*, there was an economic problem, it established itself very well, its readership gained

steadily, within a year or so people were talking of it overtaking *The Times* in circulation, you know, it was catching up. Then two things happened: Murdoch introduced a price cutting war and at the same time Whittam Smith made what I would say, now this is my opinion, I don't know what the opinion in the trade is, was his one serious mistake. There was a new Sunday founded, called *The Sunday Correspondent*, which managed to get going and the question came up as to whether *The Independent* should run a Sunday edition or not, and I think in order to kill off *The Sunday Correspondent* before it got really established they decided to rush ahead and produce a Sunday *Independent*. Unfortunately this was just the time of a sudden recession. The late Thatcher recession, Lawson's bust if you may remember, when interest rates went up to 15%. This is late 1980s, and in a way *The Independent* was never financially secure after that. It eventually got sold and it's passed through various ownerships. I mean Andreas' connection with it now is very tenuous. But he's Head of the Church Commissioners now, having been the Chief Film Censor, he's one of these people who goes from one job to another, which he does very well. I wonder whether if they'd held their horses over a Sunday edition or just had a rolling Sunday edition rather than trying to found a completely new paper which was editorially distinct it had its own staff and everything.

So you had no remit over it? (48m09)

No I had no remit over it. Michael John White went from the daily *Independent* to become the Chief Critic. They had a change of Editor, brought in Janet Street-Porter, and he said something rude about her on television so she sacked him, which is not so surprising really, and bought in Anna, whatever her name is, who is the music critic now. So that's the sort of background to all that. (48m58)

I wanted to ask if *The Independent* deliberately set out to differentiate its approach to music coverage from the other broadsheets, and if so how?

I don't think in terms of reviewing it did, except as I say, it had the no freebies policy and it did have this preference for a number of different correspondents from different parts of the country rather than sending two or three critics off in all directions. I think this was namely to save expenses probably. There are pros and cons of that I suppose because if everything is reviewed by one person you know, if you're a regular reader, what their strengths and weaknesses and deaf spots are and this gives you in a sense, even if only negatively, some way of calibrating what they're writing.

Were you asked to adopt particular style with your writing?

No, never.

They just left it to you?

I tried, obviously I was aware that I couldn't be too esoteric and technical. If I used technical terms I always tried to set them in a context where any reasonably intelligent person who didn't know what the technical term meant could have a pretty good guess from the context. I think one should do that always. In the early days this seemed to work, later on there was this sort of new spirit which has gradually crept into the media in general whereby you mustn't ever use a technical term because it might frighten off the readers or the listeners. The notion that they should be given the intelligence to work it out from the context has gone by the board I think now. I mean I point out (that if) I want to use an Italian term like *molto allegro* or something, that any musical person knows what this means and that if one doesn't know what something means one can always look it up and I point out that when I read a cricket report I haven't got a clue what a deep mid-off is and all that nonsense. But I don't therefore say 'this is esoteric writing'. If I'm sufficiently interested I find out what these things mean. But no, no, no, you mustn't have that now, anything that might stop people reading. I mean this is true I'm afraid now of even something like Radio 3 now, you'll get Producers fretting if one is too technical or whatever. I'm deeply opposed to this, I think it is condescending to readers to assume that they can't work things out from context and it makes me mad actually. (52m13)

When would you say that started or what would you attribute that change to?

Well if you want the full works you're going to get my theory of late capitalism which I'm afraid will take a very long time to expound. I think it's to do with pressures. The point about the mass market, which is supposed to produce wonderful ranges of choice and all the rest of it, and competition, actually works in exactly the opposite way in my opinion and it's deeply coercive and conformist and the choices offered are a very, very narrow lot of choices within very carefully controlled limits. And I could illustrate this very well from pop music actually, but that may come later. The point is by now it's clear that newspapers are in a sort of last ditch situation. In a way when you think about it, it is astonishing that as a sort of institution they've survived as long as they have when you see the access to news and other media, and now online and goodness knows what. I mean I think it's sheer inertia

and habit that people continue in many cases to take a daily paper. You ask most people 'do you take *The Times* or something?' and they'll say 'oh I only get it for the crossword'. I've heard that so often, I mean not just *The Times*, it's *The Independent* or anything, as though it's just something to do each day. It's a habit that gives a sense of stability and continuity. I don't think people read them anymore, apart from other media people, apart from political people. I mean one has to be careful here because I think the best standards for example in foreign reporting and political commentary are as high as they've ever been on certain papers and I would include *The Independent* there. But I think outside those areas they're really more sort of entertainment or advertising magazines. I mean we haven't mentioned the whole business of advertising but one is always told, and I'm sure it's true, that papers survive not on their circulations ultimately but on the amount of advertising they sell.

Would you root any of this change in the 1980s?

I think some of these things have been going on for a very long time and they are inevitable given the increasingly corporate society we live in. You see I think we no longer live in a democracy in the old sense, I think we live in what I call a consumocracy in which governments, along with politicians along with everybody else, have to sell themselves like products and we see the effect of this every day. Now a consumocracy offers certain goods which you buy, which you fall for, you know. The notion of democracy is that the majority may want some things, but democracy is meant to take into account all the other modes of dissent equally. Whereas consumocracy, the mass product drives out everything else. I think that this process has happened in America, it's happened particularly in this country, I don't think it has yet happened on the Continent. If you look at German newspapers and so on you will find that classical music coverage is much more extensive there and they really still have a very different culture, I mean most sizeable towns in Germany still support an opera house in a way that's inconceivable here, it's a different thing. But certainly in this country this sort of corporately controlled and I think and implicitly coercive and oppressive consumocracy has taken quite a hold.

The Wapping dispute, I know it was in 1986, but I wondered if the outcomes of that, for example there were more magazines available, if a decline could be attributed to the Wapping dispute directly because of so many other publications coming on to the market?

I don't think that. I do remember what it was like before Wapping. The print unions were particularly impossible in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They'd got themselves into an incredibly strong position mainly because newspapers are such a perishable product. You know if they don't come out within a certain number of hours they're dead because that's the way news goes. I remember at *The Telegraph* there were always petty little disputes and walk-outs over nothing and the Master Printers and the Chief Printers were paid huge salaries by then. The Wapping thing was terribly unhappy but something like that would have happened somewhere, it had to I think. Then of course, it's a bit like the Miners Strike, the battle it was about couldn't have happened a few years later because the conditions would've changed, because coal would've had to be wound down because of pollution anyway, and the nature of printing, the printers' skills which gave them the power were about to vanish anyway because of the computer revolution and so forth. So it was a very funny period that. In the newspaper world, if we're talking about broadsheets and so forth, I mean there wasn't a huge explosion at all. The same old titles went on and on, the only new ones were *The Independent* and briefly *The Correspondent*. There was another one, what was it called, founded by an Asian business man, failed very quickly but that was going to be a rival to *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mail*. Sometime in the 1980s.

On the other hand some things in the musical publications which had been very valuable, disappeared. I cut my teeth, well this was a small scale thing, on a rag called *Music and Musicians*. Now *Music and Musicians* was part of a stable of monthlies founded by a rather strange man called Philip (surname not clear on recording, sounds like 'Dosseigh'). I mean they were founded in the 1950s and they were photographic. They were printed on hot press, paper and so on, and they came out monthly and carried features and reviews. There was *Films and Filming*, *Music and Musicians*, *Plays and Players*, and they had some standing, they did a good job in their way. They were to some extent middle brow but they were quite extensive and a lot of good people wrote for them. An Oxford contemporary of mine who'd been at Magdalen College suddenly emerged in 1968 or 1969 as the Advertising Manager on this thing, he'd been a countertenor and had given it up. He said to me, and I was still teaching in Bognor then and feeling very miserable, he said 'look you're always talking about music why don't you write us some articles?' and I said 'look, I've got fifteen lectures to prepare tonight', and he got Boosey and Hawkes to send me an enormous package of scores to review and these were scores by up and coming young composers like Peter Maxwell Davies and so on in whom I was very interested then, and I looked at this parcel and I thought 'I want these scores, I

can't afford them, I suppose I'll have to write that article otherwise I'll have to send them back'. So that's how I started. So I started writing for *Music and Musicians*, and Tom, this is another Tom Sutcliffe, this is one of the great confusions of British journalism, there are two Tom Sutcliffe's. But this is the one who became Editor of *Music and Musicians* for three or four years and I became one of his Associate Editors for a time, and I wrote a number of quite long features for that, you know, sort of 5000/ 6000 words on contemporary composers at that time, they were my first big articles. I wrote an article about Alexander Goehr, the composer, who wrote back and said he was very interested in the article, and I'd spotted things without having been told about them and he was very pleased. I wrote to him and his letter was so sympathetic and so helpful, 'I want to be in the music profession not teaching English what can I do?' and he said 'well look you've got a first degree, I'm visiting Lecturer at Southampton University next year where Peter Evans, Professor, is founding a one year BMus for composers, why don't you apply to him, send him some work and I'm sure because you've got a first degree he'll take you on', which is what happened. It was after doing that that I was able to get a toe in the door. I then began to write for *The Listener*. *The Listener* was a weekly like the *New Statesman* and *The Spectator*, published by the BBC and its original purpose had been to print the scripts of talks. I remember the old advertisement for it which said 'catch the fleeting word in print' which you would see on tube stations in the 1950s and so on. But it expanded into a sort of general magazine which had a reviews section and features section, a very good books section, and it had a very, very distinguished history of literary editors and it was a very, very important magazine. The BBC killed it off in 1991/ 1992 thereabouts, but I wrote quite a lot of stuff for them at one time or another and it was a very, very valuable publication. I still have a stack of them somewhere. (1h04m34)

So it was more that established classical music magazines were disappearing rather than anything new coming on to the market that had an impact?

After *Music and Musicians* and *The Listener* I was approached by the *New Statesman* in 1973, by John Gross actually, the husband of Miriam Gross who was nearly the Arts Editor of *The Independent*, who said we need a new Music Critic. So for three and a half years I was Music Critic on the *New Statesman* and I was very flattered by that because that had a very prestigious history. Desmond Shawe-Taylor had been music critic, David Cairns had been music critic of the *Statesman* for a time, David Drew, various people who I admired as writers had been before me and I was very proud to do that, and Anthony Howard who is still around, a Political Commentator, was then the Editor and it had quite a big circulation then and people took the music column very seriously. John Gross was succeeded by Claire Tomlin as Literary Editor with whom I got on very well and the Sub was Martin Amis, who was just down from Oxford and all his pals, whose names now desert me, but various people were in and out, and James Fenton for example was the Political Columnist, I knew James, and a lot of people were in and out of that office. It was very lively, it was quite a high-powered thing then.

So there were no new magazines that came onto the market that had an effect upon either your writing or the style of *The Independent*?

No, *Music and Musicians* finally folded, again I think in the late 1980s. The original Editor I think did himself in and it was sold and it ran on under other people for a time and then vanished. There have been other attempts to found journals, I mean I've written from time to time of course for *The Musical Times*, again, longish articles mostly or book reviews. I did a certain amount of writing for *Grove*, the 1980 edition, *Grove* six. I was approached in fact by the late Stanley Sadie to write the entry for the latest *Grove* on Music Criticism since the War, 5000 words to cover the entire music criticism of the world. I thought this will take me months and months, I mean after all what do I know about Polish music criticism and so on and how and how am I going to manage not reading all those languages. So eventually I turned him down. I must look it up sometime and see who he eventually got to do it. (1h07m40)

Do you know why *Music and Musicians* stopped?

I think it was just not, I mean the original stable of magazines were run by this guy who no-one ever saw really who was a sort of hysteric. One was never quite sure how it was funded but one was jolly lucky to get paid at all. It was all freelancers going in and I think when it did finally go bust it left quite a lot of creditors behind it. It just wasn't economically viable. But its major days were late 1960s early 1970s I think. I've got about 30 or 40 editions of it, or the ones that I was writing. But that was nearly all on contemporary music. (1h08m37)

Thinking particularly about the rock and pop writers, because there seemed to be an explosion in the number of rock and pop magazines that emerged, with print production changes, that that may have affected rock and pop in the broadsheets.

Yes that's true.

But I'm not hearing that there was a parallel in classical?

No, no, I think there wasn't.

But there's a huge lurking topic here, and I am talking about this country again as distinct from the Continent where I think things are very different. People always used to say it was the land without music in the 19th century because there had been no great English composers since Purcell really. There had been some good composers in the 18th century, of course the major figure had been Handel, who wasn't strictly English. There were a lot of decent 19th century composers, but they all somehow seemed to lose heart and the British public, in so far as it was musical, seemed to prefer foreigners, Mendelssohn and people like that, Berlioz and Wagner came to conduct in London and so forth. Really this only began to change towards the end of the century with the rise of figures like Stanford and Parry and then of course the major figure of Elgar, who was a figure of international stature it gradually emerged. There was a lot of music going on, these huge choral societies in the north which would sing Elijah every year and things like that. I mean it's not that there was not many, many, many musical people around but at the level of classical culture, somehow there was a sort of inferiority complex that it could never be as good as the Continent. English composers invariably went to study in Leipzig or somewhere like that rather than the Royal College and this kind of thing, well the Royal College wasn't founded until the 1880s, but the Royal Academy was founded earlier. There was this sort of national inferiority complex really, although a huge amount of music was going on in London. If you read George Bernard Shaw's music criticism, and it's wonderful stuff from the 1880s and 1890s, because before he became a playwright he started as a music critic and he knew a lot about music, he was a raving Wagnerian and hated Brahms and so on. They're wonderful reading, still very vivid. You read what was going on, the recitals, the visits of composers, the orchestras, the choral societies and so on, there was a huge amount. It isn't as if it was unmusical in the sense that no-one was interested, but it was curiously unfocussed and very much dominated by German taste mostly. I mean there would be figures like Grieg who would come from Scandinavia he was very popular, and Tchaikovsky came from Russia several times and so forth. French music, Saint-Saens would come. But what happened was, there was around the 1900s a rather conscious effort among British composers to develop a more British school of composition. Now everybody always associates this with folk song and nostalgia and so on, but that's not really the point. The real impetus behind this was a kind of socialism of whom the originator was William Morris. William Morris, who lived near here in Hammersmith who died in 1896, was a kind of craftsman socialist with a mission that art could be for all through craft and people making things, he was dead against industrialisation and the mass market, he thought beautiful things should be made. He had a kind of visionary notion of the Middle Ages as a sort of paradise of craftsmen and community which of course was wide of the mark. But still, it was all tied up with early socialism and two composers particularly got very caught up with this and that was Holst and Vaughan Williams. I mean Holst conducted the Hammersmith Socialist Choir in the 1890s at William Morris's house. Vaughan Williams I think possibly had a sort of guilt because he had a private income and didn't have to work at all but my goodness nobody worked harder. They both had this terrific thing that we must raise the standards of amateur music making and bring people up to music. In a way Holst particularly pioneered, almost by himself, the sort of educational methods and music training in education we take for granted now, the notion of learning by doing. This is Holst and he was doing it in the 1900s, teaching at about four schools at once. That man worked himself to death, it's very, very sad. There was a sort of tradition of English 20th century composers which continues still which is actually a social, left wing tradition. In the 1930s you'd get young composers like Britten and Tippett who were pacifists and very, very left wing, again working with amateurs. Tippett conducted an orchestra of unemployed musicians during the depression, Britten writing music for choirs and setting up a local festival after the war at Aldeburgh and so on. This is all sort of the same 'music for the people' idea of which the folk revival was part. But the real emphasis behind it is more political than nostalgic and a lot of people miss that, and it goes on still with younger composers doing residences with orchestras, going into prisons, working with school children all this sort of thing. In fact if you survey English composers of the 20th century there's really only been two right-wing composers, one of them was Elgar, who because he was the son of a shopkeeper in stuffy, provincial, Victorian Worcestershire was made to feel that he was trade and not gentry you see because the class system was so fierce then and he couldn't wait to climb into the nobility and get his knighthood and so on. So he was very right wing. The other one

was William Walton who was exactly the same, came from a middle class back street in Oldham in Lancashire and was determined to better himself. All his girlfriends had titles, they were all Duchesses and Baronesses and things and of course he eventually succeeded in becoming a knight. They were both rather right wing. But otherwise there's been this sort of left wing spirit which in a way has inured English music from the excesses of technological modernism of the sort of Darmstadt school on the Continent. (1h16m38)

Just while you are talking about the political climate, how would you say Thatcherism affected your writing and also the stance of *The Independent*, if at all?

Well if you look at my career I wrote first for a socialist weekly, the *New Statesmen*, then I wrote for a Tory national Sunday paper and then I wrote for a supposedly non-aligned liberal paper, *The Independent*. That's what the title is meant to mean.

I didn't know if perhaps the climate of Thatcherism meant that there were less performances available for you to go and see?

I think where this did affect things was in terms of subsidy and the attitude to public subsidy of the arts. I mean Thatcher had this notion that there should be less public subsidy because in a successful economy private business would support the arts which of course didn't on the whole prove to be true. The only arts they supported were the very obvious arts, I mean you get endless businessmen subscribing to a Pavarotti beano but you're not going to get them supporting some avant-garde series at The Warehouse or something like that so that didn't really work, it was tried for a time. What they thought they were doing was the sort of American model where traditionally there had always been much less public subsidy but there of course the tax system is different because you can set charitable giving to the arts and to culture against tax and that is why all these Rockefeller foundations and so on give huge sums to the Metropolitan Opera houses and local symphony orchestras, because it suits them tax wise to do. But you see we've never had that in this country. Now if Thatcher had bought that in then she might have got private patronage to work again but of course the exchequer couldn't afford to do it. (1h19m03)

I'm really interested in whether or not there was a hierarchy between the genres at *The Independent* and whether or not that then changed? So was it the case that when *The Independent* started classical was seen as 'top dog' if you like with rock and pop at the bottom of the page and over time did things shift so that rock and pop perhaps gained more coverage, and was that at the expense of classical coverage?

Over the years rock and pop have certainly gained far, far more actual column space, that's undoubted. I mean whole supplements now are devoted, I mean pop coverage on Fridays is sort of five or six pages now, you will never get anything like that for classical. But then it's a little difficult to say because as I say there was less space overall to start with since it was just the single fold broadsheet. Then of course it started having a back half which was sometimes broadsheet size and sometimes tabloid size. Once the paper got into more difficult financial waters Editors tend to resort to this old fall back, I'll never understand why they do it, they have this notion that if they have a redesign circulation will suddenly reverse itself and shoot up again. I've seen this done over and (over), I've lost count of the number of redesigns, which has included different sizes of second half and so on and finally the abolition of the broadsheet altogether which temporarily did pay off because *The Independent* did it first and of course the other papers, several of them, were then compelled to follow. But when I say it was successful to *The Independent*, it pulled the circulation up in percentage terms quite remarkably but since the actual circulation before that was so low it wasn't a vast number of actual readers and of course the effect of that has now worn off and I believe the circulation is gently falling away again, as it is for most of the so so-called quality papers.

But just to get back to your question, I think behind it and this is really what I was working round to saying when I was talking about the whole politics of 20th century music is that partly because of the long term efforts over 70 or 80 years, primarily of composers but of some enlightened patrons and then after the war particularly of certain labour governments who believed the arts should be supported. I'm thinking Ministers of Arts like Jennie Lee and so on in the 1960s who succeeded in building up the images of the arts, particularly in the 1960s, it was thought that this was a selling point for English culture and so on, the actual status of classical music, I mean probably the number of people who listen to it regularly and strictly, the proportion of people in the population who listen to what we might call classical music, and that needs defining which I'll try to do in a minute, I have a suspicion is fairly constant. It's probably about ten per cent of the adult population. I mean that figure is off the top of my head but a proportion. I mean even today when it's not so uncommon now

in the media to hear the notion of banded around 'oh well classical music is dead now it's all world music and pop, who needs classical music any more?' The sort of people who say that I have strong views on, which I'll come onto in a minute. But even today if you put together the regular listening figures of Radio 3 it's about two million, and Classic FM which is about seven million, you are getting near to about ten million of an adult population of, well we've just got to sixty million in this country of which say twenty million are children so it's not an inconsiderable chunk of the adult population. And that's not taking into account people who buy records and so forth and one occasionally sees statistics of the number of people who attend operas is higher than the number of people who go to football matches. I mean who knows what all these figures mean. But I don't think that the proportion of people who take classical music relatively seriously, who need it, who feel it as an integral part of their life, has probably varied that much over the decades perhaps for 100 years. What has happened of course is that access has changed, because one must remember that in 1900 there would have been vast tracts of the English population who never went near a concert hall, this was for posh people, 'not for the likes of us'. I mean there were huge class things built in there, it was a leisured class thing really, upper middle class and aristocracy and so forth. All right there were workers in these big choirs and so on but they would be working in a very specific tradition, a handful of great communal works (were) specially written for that purpose, but that doesn't mean that they'd know any Beethoven or Schumann Symphonies and so forth. So on that level I don't think things have changed.

But what has changed is the public perception and particularly as fostered, I'm sad to say, by the media and by the market and by market forces. There's a sort of loss of social credit or social standing or social sanction for serious art of any sort actually, but it particularly affects classical music because it is perceived as the most difficult of them all. You can still sell painting because painting is sexy because you get silly Damien Hirst scandals all the time and absurd what nots about the price of paintings. Painting is a commodity, it's an object which can be sold for colossal sums. You can't sell your symphony for colossal sums. There is an economic and market thing. Architecture, again because it's a public thing in that sense is unavoidable, has a different standing and so forth. But I know that as a composer who knows many, many composers there's a general feeling that the old informed public, the sort of earnest school teachers who would go home in the 1950s and listen to the third programme in order to improve their cultural outlook has fallen away or doesn't exist any more and that therefore the standing of classical music is not what it was, it is not considered central to the culture in the way that it still is for example in Germany and in many parts of the Continent and this is a depressing thing after this huge 70 or 80 year effort in consciousness raising and all those dedicated composers and patrons and musicians, it's almost as though the clock has been put back to England as an essentially philistine country where serious music is concerned. It's not true. It hasn't actually happened, but that is the perception. (1h27m54)

Would you attribute any of those changes to the period that I'm looking at, 1981 – 1991?

Yes, I think the general ethos of Thatcherism was to some extent part of this. After the war the arts played rather safe for a time for various reasons, and particularly music. English music was rather, there were very experimental things going on the Continent, the young Boulez and Stockhausen, all those experimentalists, John Cage from America and people like that, and in England it was a bit conservative and there was a sort of explosion of more radical thinking in the 1960s, this is true in popular music too of course, but it was aided and abetted particularly by the BBC and I mentioned the BBC already in listening figures because in a way you can't entirely prize away the national papers from the BBC because the BBC is a national service. If you go to America, national public service broadcasting is a pale shadow, but then America has no capital city as such, it's a series of city states almost with their local universities, their local symphony orchestras and their local papers. I suppose the *New York Times* comes closest to being a national daily in the States, but it isn't really. Now this country not only have the half dozen national dailies which you can pick up anywhere the next morning in the country, but we have a broadcasting system which means that if a young composer has a piece performed at The Proms it can be heard instantly in every corner and length of the land so that a composer still can, or still could until recently, feel that they had some sort of national standing if they got to The Proms. Their first commission, people will be listening 'what's this young chap like, is he going to be any good?' There was still a central thing like that and the papers and the BBC were all part of that one thing and one felt this particularly in the 1960s when people were prepared to give difficult music, modern music, a go then. I've seen the Festival Hall jam packed for a difficult Stockhausen concert and jam packed with school children and young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s in a way you can't imagine now. Stockhausen was modern and sexy, he was hardly

differentiated from a pop figure. Decca brought out a disc entitled Stockhausen's Greatest Hits I remember.

So the general ethos of Thatcherism was part of this sense of classical music losing its prestige?

I think so because you can't imagine the average Tory Thatcherite, even having heard of Boulez and Stockhausen. They might go to Pavarotti or they might have heard of Alfred Brendel playing Beethoven because that's supposed to be excellent. You remember they were always going on about 'we must promote excellence in the arts' it was never defined what this ridiculous word meant. But basically I suspect it meant Pavarotti and The Three Tenors.

So the most commercial?

And then you get increasingly desperate efforts by the record industry, because this is the other thing we need to bring in here, to sort of re-brand classical music so you get things like The Three Tenors, Nessun Dorma.

This was the 1980s wasn't it?

It was the end of the 1980s early 1990s. Or Simon Rattle conducting his first Beethoven cycle would be built up as though it's some great media event, and copies rushed to all the shops. But this is largely a market creation and a desperate throw by the big record companies to restore their sales. I mean that's partly their own fault because they scored such a wonderful, spectacular own goal with the invention of the CD, but that's another matter. (1h32m33)

OK, so there's something to do with the climate of Thatcherism having an impact on the record industry which then perhaps put value on those artists which were most commercially successful?

You've got to be a bit careful because there were always popular performers back in the 1920s. I mean somebody like Caruso singing Neapolitan songs and so on was done for a popular market, it wasn't a high art thing. John McCormack singing sentimental ballads. These were fine singers who were also great opera singers. But basically the market was made up of the same people who listen to Classic FM, that public hasn't changed either.

If I can just go back to rock and pop. When *The Independent* launched did it deliberately think 'we're going to differentiate ourselves from *The Guardian* and *The Times* by having more rock and pop coverage?'

No, no I never heard anything like that.

Did it creep in as time went on?

I think it was forced in purely by commercial and advertising pressures, because pop sells a huge amount of advertising space.

So it wasn't part of an initial plan, to be leading the way in rock and pop coverage?

No, no. Not that I ever heard and I can't remember seeing any particular signs of that. I mean it was a sort of balance of coverage like any of the other papers initially. There were writers and pop and so on, some of them were rather highfalutin actually. I mean there's nothing as pretentious as the most pretentious pop writing as you probably know. It far out-strips writing on classical music at times in its social pirouettes and so on. (1h34m33)

So no deliberate attempt to be stylistically or quantitatively to be leading the way with rock and pop coverage?

I cannot recall anybody saying that at the time, in the 1980s or even in the early 1990s. I think it was always accepted, it came about, basically selling advertising space and so on. Whether that's still the case. I suspect now, and this is where I have to be a little bit careful, but I'm not going to be. I suspect, I have an awful theory, think of the promotion of pop, I'm talking about really commercial pop, not more sort of interesting esoteric pop, some of which can be quite as radical as what's going on elsewhere. I can remember when pop as a phenomenon began, about 1956, Bill Haley and his Comets and Elvis, I was already sixteen then and I can remember what it was like before, these sentimental ballads with Frankie Lane and dinky little up-tempo numbers with Doris Day and all this sort of stuff, I mean this is what I grew up with. So I was perfectly aware of pop as a new thing and Cliff Richard and skiffle, and all of those early pop phenomena, oh yes every school had its skiffle group in the late 1960s, and Buddy Holly and on and on it went and the Beatles, who after all weren't half bad. But it had a sort of lightness then, it was fun music, it didn't take itself so horribly seriously as it does in some quarters now. Anyway, but the point is once the promotional industry and the

corporations cottoned on to the fact that there was this huge teenage market ready to be milked with increasing amounts of pocket money, the amount of money and time and really power bought to bear on conditioning audiences has grown I think to frightening proportions. Think, a child grows up now, it hears the basic thump, thump, thump of pop in the womb. It goes into shops, it goes into shopping malls, it hears the television, it hears the radio and so on, this sound is going on all the time. It is a form of musical indoctrination in certain musical modes which exclude all else. And the power of the international media conglomerates to promote this stuff, this is why I say it has become oppressive I think to the exclusion of all else, I think has grown to frightening proportions and that is what this is really all about. I have a very, very basic sociological (theory) here, which I have written about, it's a very interesting phenomenon and I think potentially a very sinister one. Up to the mid 20th century or early 20th century all folk music, popular music, vernacular music shall we say, music of the people, unsophisticated music and so on, was equally divided between duple and triple rhythm. There were, to put it basically, both marches and waltzes or whatever. Increasingly as the 20th century has gone on in popular music, duple time, i.e. 2/4 or 4/4, has squeezed out triple time altogether. When was the last time you can recall a hit that was not in duple time? In other words one of the two basic human metres has been driven out. Now why do I say this is sinister? Because triple time is flexible as we know from Strauss waltzes, you can pull it around but it's still in triple time. You can't do that with duple time because if you lengthen the upbeat it immediately turns in triple time. So it's all rigid downbeat, it's the sound of marching. And I think it's the sound of coercion and oppression. It masquerades and is sold as the music of youthful rebellion of course but it's the same absolute beat.

There's a gentleman who is fortunately not usually there downstairs who is about 40, who comes in and puts on the same disco beat, this thump, thump and I find this physically and psychologically so oppressive. I can only hear the beat. If I put my ear to the floor I can hear the crass tune going over and over again over it. But now the really interesting thing is, and you can confirm whether this is true or not because you read this stuff, pop writing has grown to enormous proportions, there are whole conferences, there are vast areas of academic research and all the rest of it, and huge theories are spun about this that and the other. Never once have I heard or seen anybody refer to what this particular phenomenon, which is so obvious that everybody takes it for granted, they haven't noticed, that triple time has been driven out of popular music. Now what does this mean? I think it's a very, very sinister development because I think duple time is inherently, if it becomes obsessive and so on, is the beat of militarism. It's the beat of conformity of everybody marching together. It's the beat of rock. The mass meeting. I get a very queasy feeling when I see a Wembley Stadium crammed with young people, it puts me in the mind of a Nuremberg rally. Fortunately it's about something essentially trivial thank goodness, it's not about Hitler, but it may not always be.

If somebody can come up with a pop hit in triple time I will eat my words. There used to be a vein of sentimental ballads every now and then which would get into the charts but I can't think of one since the 1970s. It partly comes from jazz actually because jazz of course is all duple time too. I can remember the Modern Jazz Quartet in the 1950s trying rather self consciously to produce a jazz waltz but it didn't really work. (1h42m43)

Now that you mention jazz, thinking of this hierarchy idea. At *The Independent* would you say that classical was given the most prestige, and then jazz and then pop?

No it's not given any prestige now, under the current dispensation, because I don't think anybody on the editorial board. I mean our current Arts Editor, his main interest is the drama, I don't think he knows much about classical music, he goes to Proms because there are receptions thrown in for Arts Editors and so forth, and it's conspicuous that the classical reviews are always squeezed pretty well into the smallest space except for opera. Opera somehow always escapes this because of its social dimension, because there are stories about opera singers and tantrums and things.

This is the other thing I wanted to say actually. The fate of music features in the classical industry. You see I was fairly unique, to misuse the word, even in the late 1980s and the early 1990s in having this patch where I could write about anything. I think Richard Morrison may have had a patch like this in *The Times* for a time. He still has this patch in which he does this sort of opinion page in *BBC Music Magazine* for example. That is the one journal that did get founded actually just at the end of your period, its first Editor was of course Fiona Maddocks and that started in 1992. I remember her ringing me up and saying 'would I do a little regular column?' the summer before, and it was the first I'd heard of this thing happening. It's still going but the BBC have hived it off now and I don't know how much longer it will run. But I had a regular book reviewing column for that for example. A

whole page in which I could choose a book and month and review, which ran for several years which was a very, very useful slot since *The Independent* was being increasingly difficult. (1h45m12)

But what has tended to happen, is reviews have been sort of squeezed. I mean in the past, in the 1950s and 1960s on the arts pages, when there was no pop writing, you would probably have two or three short music reviews a day in *The Telegraph* and *The Times* or so on, there'd only be little patches, or *The Guardian* too anyway. It's very rare to find more than one now, unless there's an opera and a concert. Opera as I say is always slightly different because it straddles the world between that and theatre and news. But reviews have been squeezed. We have the absurd situation that on any day in central London alone there are about eight reviewable concerts and events that are from concert halls, the Wigmore Hall and the rest of it, three halls on the South Bank and so forth, and they're only going to ever review one event so it's sort of fairly arbitrary coverage. Another area that doesn't get reviewed at all, we did it for a time in the late 1990s is what gets broadcast. Now, as John Drummond who was then controller of Radio Three said 'it's absurd, you chaps go out and review some hole in the corner recital attended by 300 people, I've just put out an important orchestral concert last night which has had an audience of half a million and none of you review it', and he was quite right. So we did run a weekly radio review column for a time until it was dropped because of lack of space, and I'm sorry that's not done. That's all about reviews. (1h47m04)

As for features what has increasingly happened I suspect, and it was already beginning to happen in the late 1980s if not before, I mean it's always been true up to a point. There are two sorts of features, there are 'think pieces' provoked by some sort of issue or some forthcoming event, preview pieces which go wider than just reviewing a specific event, and there are 'puff pieces' – interviews with prima donnas or conductors or opera producers or designers or whatever, often only tangentially connected with music in fact but none the less filed under classical music because opera is classical music.

You're the first person that's defined puff pieces for me. I've heard that term quite a bit.

I think that's what's meant. I mean this really started in the 1980s. I can remember there was a time in which all the features and many of the reviews, rather than being about the music, were about either opera production, you know outrage at the latest Wagner Ring which somebody had set in a power station and all that, that sort of stuff, and there'd be nothing about Wagner in this at all. Or there was this particular thing about authentic performance then, period instruments and so on. So it was always on about the way you played things and what instruments you used but again never about the music. Now that's all sort of died away because the period performance movement has sunk into the mainstream. It's had its effect and now that's gone. I think people have even got fed up with being outraged by the latest opera production. So on the whole we have, I mean there's still some reasonable preview pieces, previewing some important new work, but they're very rare now. And it is mostly interview pieces which are easy to do. Now the bad thing about this is that whereas a preview or a think piece can be independent, a puff piece is of course hand in glove with the agencies and the promoters and it's a circle, it's fine, the puff piece appears, the concert is given by the prima donna, the concert is reviewed quite often by the person who did the interview and everybody is happy. Except that there is no independent critical what not involved at all practically, it's squeezed out. So it's essentially corrupt.

So starting towards the end of the 1980s you saw a decline in think pieces and an increase in puff pieces?

Well I certainly saw that, but remember the think pieces had been intermittent and I'd been rather special in enjoying this period in which I could do them regularly. I mean this didn't happen on every paper. There was a particularly bad patch on *The Guardian* in the 1980s I think where the music coverage, under Peter Preston's editorship, for some reason the arts pages really shrivelled and music coverage was terrible. I remember when Andrew Clements went in and became the Chief Music Critic and was in charge of dispensing, arranging the month's reviews and so on, most of the reviews he set up got spiked, they never reached the page. That's somebody you should talk to. He was the Chief Classical Critic, but in that job he actually had to arrange the reviewing to the other reviewers as well and that sort of thing, whereas I never had to do that. (1h51m27)

I've been hearing some journalists say that they would get a monthly schedule of the events that they had to go and see. Was that something that happened at *The Independent*?

No. Never. In the days when *The Independent* had a Music Editor, it had Fiona Maddocks and then Robert Maycock for a time and then Mark Pappenheim who eventually became Arts Editor and then

was sacked, very foolishly because he was a damn good Arts Editor. But the absurd thing is that the subsequent Arts Editors have been so unknowledgable about classical music that Mark has been retained through the back door simply to arrange the months reviewing so he emails us before each month and says 'put in your bids now and I'll do my best for you'. So we all say the things we'd most like to do and he fixes it as best he can.

But that wasn't from 1986, that was later on?

Well then, I could discuss this with Fiona I could just lift the phone and we'd talk about this.

Do you know when this changed, when Mark Pappenheim was doing the scheduling, was that after the period I'm looking at?

There was an upheaval, when was it, about 1986, when the paper changed hands and they bought in a new Editor called Rosie Boycott who lasted about two months or three months. I think she and Andrew Marr were joint Editor for a time. Andrew Marr had been the Political Correspondent and eventually of course subsequently has been a very high profile Chief British Correspondent for the BBC, for Radio 4 and so forth. For a time he was Editor and she was brought in and I think they tried to write together, and then she took over and she wanted to bring in her own Arts Editor so Pappenheim was given a golden handshake and then she threw up her hands after a bit and found she couldn't do it, I think she went to *The Express* or something, and then there was an awful period of uncertainty and the arts page was edited by sports reporters and nobody knew what was happening and the state of the copy when it reached the page was villainous. It was when, *The Independent* had been taken over by The Mirror Group for a time. I wonder if they had ideas of asset stripping because it didn't work and I think they'd just left, I can't remember the circumstances now, I mean don't use any of this because I can't get it right in my head, but it was certainly a period of uncertainty and eventually it was taken on by the Pearson group who still support it now. But the whole stable of the newspaper is now based in Dublin.

With all of this uncertainty and change did you find that was affecting music criticism in *The Independent* or did it just keep going?

As I say Pappenheim remained after he left as Arts Editor, he was re-engaged simply on the basis of arranging the classical music coverage each month. There was nobody on the paper who seemed competent to do it, and he's continued to do that to this day, and he does it very well. He's an extremely knowledgeable and scholarly man, and he knows his classical music very well and he knows what's on. He's done a variety of other jobs at the same time. He was the Editor of The Proms programme notes and The Proms brochure for many years although he's left that this year, but an extremely good Editor, very, very scrupulous and careful and so on.

Were different Editors very hands-on or hands-off and did that change?

No, the only one who's taken the slightest interest in the classical coverage was the first Editor Andreas Whittam Smith. After that there's been no contact at all above Arts Editor level and as far as I know, nobody on the current board of *The Independent* has the slightest interest. It's just left to the current Arts Editor to dispose and he tends to give the major space to the visual arts which are not badly served but they get a lot of space because painting is sexy because it's always in the news and so on, and to the theatre which is its own thing and to his own sort of little scribbles about the state of the arts which rarely have anything to say about classical music which occupy the Saturday page now. (1h57m25)

So we've covered Thatcherism and the Wapping Dispute, and you've said there were no new music magazines that had an impact.

Well until *BBC Music Magazine*, yes, which is just outside your period.

In terms of hierarchy it sounds like classical was at the top of the hierarchy?

I don't think anybody sort of drew up a what not like that, certainly the Editor, Andreas Whittam Smith was a classical music man and Thomas Sutcliffe who was the Arts Editor, although he was not particularly a music man was an intellectual and believed in the high arts in general, I think that's fair to say. He'd come from the BBC and he did later learn the piano and was touchingly enthusiastic about simple Mozart piano sonatas and things, I think he sort of 'got it' as time went on. Esoteric pop was part of the thing I think but the sense that huge acres should be given to them, no there was nothing like that then, I don't think.

And jazz, was that seen as higher or lower in the hierarchy than pop?

Well jazz as you may know has a funny history, it has popular periods and it has kind of minority and esoteric periods which it's rather in now and has been for some time. I mean most people would regard it as a niche music now and I mean compared with pop of course it is. But what one has to remember is that what passed for jazz in the earlier days, between the wars, was actually popular dance music, it wasn't real jazz so it's sort of slightly ill-defined.

So I'm getting the sense that there wasn't really a hierarchy at all?

No I don't think there was, but I think there was a general bias in *The Independent* when it started towards the high arts, I think that would be fair to say. That was part of the ethos of the paper.

But that probably shifted with time, with the changes you were talking about?

It certainly shifted, but to what extent it is due to conscious policy and to what extent it's simply due to the sort of changing ethos in general it's difficult to say. I think it's more specifically due to advertising pressures actually as much as anything. But there is one other sociological thing here behind this, which really follows on from what I was saying about the early conditioning. We do now have a whole generation of people who are now in their fifties who were born into pop, these are supposedly adults, but they seem to have a teenager mentality, they still have this sort of fierce loyalty to the boy bands they love, to the football teams. I mean to hear these supposedly intelligent middle aged men going on with this sort of facetious religiosity about football, fast cars and so on, I find this a hideously alien culture and I fear the media is full of these people. I think there is a whole generation now that simply hasn't grown up and sees nothing wrong with the fact and think that that's what the world is like and that's what their readers want. That's the only explanation I have for the present state of the paper. And they mouth this mantra, they read Norman Lebrecht who points out the troubles of the major record companies, forgetting that the minor companies are all doing fine because they're more enterprising than the major ones, shot themselves in the foot by inventing the CD which doesn't wear out, the fools. So when everybody had bought their standard repertory again they stopped buying, of course they did, except they went on buying from the small independent companies because they explored more interesting repertoire. And the major companies meanwhile sunk with their colossal super-structures and PR's which cost a bomb and which were always out to lunch when you needed them, as I well remember from my record reviewing days. But I do find this sort of aging lad culture which we now have utterly, utterly alien and repugnant. I don't know how to deal with it. These people just don't seem to grow up anymore.

One more quick question here and then I'll whiz onto the recruitment side of things.

It's often said that rock criticism declined during the 1980s and I just wondered if you get a sense that there was a decline in the quality of classical music journalism, broadsheet music journalism in particular, and if so when did that start and what kicked it off?

I think that's difficult to say because after all we're dealing with a profession which is very small and there are a number of disparate individuals with their different strengths and weaknesses and so on and their different degrees of commitment I would say. What I would say, for example, is that when I started to write, which is the late 1960s, early 1970s, and I was reviewing a lot of new music, you would go to the run through of a new work, a festival or new BBC commission of an orchestral piece by a young composer, and there in the stalls you would see Peter Heyworth, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, perhaps Martin Cooper from *The Telegraph* or Peter Stadlen from *The Telegraph*, various other critics from the newspapers, all of whom would have taken the trouble to phone up the publishers and get a copy of the score, doing their homework. Today, none of them would lift a foot to do that anymore so that whether this says something about the waning commitment to new music or whether it says something more general about how seriously critics approach their jobs I wouldn't like to say. I think that there is a slight waning of commitment but I think partly it's because the people involved, like myself, are seriously depressed by the conditions under which we increasingly have to work, i.e. less and less space and the general sense that nobody gives a damn for what we do anymore on the papers, higher up. I think that's an operative thing as well. One goes on doing it because one believes in the art form and one would like to share one's perceptions with other people who do too. I think a review still has three basic functions: it acquaints you with an event that happened, I mean that is on a simple news level, this concert happened; if it's an opera or a recording or a music book, something that's around for quite a long time it tells people, you know, it's a consumer report, should they book for this run of *The Ring* or not? would it be worth trying to get in later in the run?; and it also gives notice of the rise of talent, you know this young artist should be watched so you make a mental note to catch him next time, or this conductor who you've always taken rather for granted as a routinier seems to be

entering a new golden age and there's a new breadth to his interpretation, so you make a mental note to catch them the next time. So there are actual practical functions to a review, it's not just an ephemeral thing that's gone. It's a record of an event and a consumer report and a marker for things to come. (2h06m55)

So there is this sense of deterioration, but could you pin any of the causes for that down to the period that I'm looking at?

If you mean to the sort of general atmosphere of Thatcherism and so on I don't think that I could. I think these are all part of longer term trends, that to some extent were inevitable really according to the economic pressures underlying and developing and also as a sort of result more, the sidelining of classical music by the huge promotional and conditioning power of the disseminators, the multi-media corporations who control mass pop music. I think it's a sort of sideswipe of that, probably.

Was there a canonical style of writing that you felt you had to adhere to with respect to classical music criticism and did that change during this period?

Canonical is an interesting term, it's very loaded these days.

Any grand footsteps that you felt you had to follow?

Well I read critics long before I imagined I would ever become one because I was interested in music and there were some whose writing I admired more than others. No, I don't think there are any footsteps. I think one is duty bound to make whatever point one is making as clear as possible and so forth. One, if possible, tries to give a review or a feature or an article a shape which leads the reader through an argument with some sort of coherent structure as one would if one were writing an essay or a report or anything else. But one perhaps also, I suppose one develops certain stylistic habits which they recognise and which you can in a way have fun with or play upon. At one stage I had a sort of game of working at least one extremely obscure item of English vocabulary into each article, but placing it in a context where it would be understandable because I thought one should try and keep neglected words in, and this was the old English student in me coming out. And so I would place a word like plangent or something like that, now everybody uses plangent I notice, but things like that. There is a sort of games playing side to this, you know you had certain things to say, certain amount of information to get over, names of works, this sort of thing, you want to make it sort of grab the readers, perhaps make it entertaining. Maybe if you're in a good mood or it's a fun piece you play little games with the style and so on. One of the things I do remember actually about this, when I was writing a regular weekly feature on a topic, you know 1200 words, I became very conscious of certain habits of writing which I then would try to avoid. I would say to myself, I would start a piece and I would say 'I can't use that opening again, I've got to find another way into this, I've used that opening so often I now recognise it as a formula, I must find a different way of doing it'. So one becomes conscious of things like that. One doesn't want to be predictable obviously, one doesn't want to repeat oneself more than one has to. So these are all constraints and spurs if you're writing regularly, especially if you've got a fair amount of space as I had, so I really exercised almost as much ingenuity in trying to vary the tone, the plan, the approach, the opening, the closing and so on of the essays as on their specific content.

So it was your very own personal style, you weren't looking at formulas used by previous writers?

Well of course one inevitably absorbs these and brings them out again in one's own way almost without noticing, or not even consciously sometimes. On other times one may adapt things, yes, and of course one may also use deliberate illusion. One may take a famous phrase by somebody and modify it by one word, hoping that the reader will know the original phrase and know what you're doing.

Were there any classical music writers that you modelled yourself on?

I mentioned Shaw, who is a wonderful writer, he's very, very crisp. But Shaw had sort of 3000 words to review even short concerts so he could spend 1000 words being funny about something quite different before getting to the point, which he did brilliantly of course. If he'd been disrupted by some lady sitting in front of him with a hat with a stuffed bird on it, we'd get a huge disquisition on vegetarianism before we even got to the concert and so forth. Well you can't do that now because there just isn't the space and I don't think readers would want that sort of thing. But there are ways into essays, and out of essays and through essays. It became a whole field of thought in its own right as I was doing this. Because the actual dimension of the essay was all pretty constant. They were all about 1200 words. I mean I didn't sort of sit and say 'is this word in my style or not', it wasn't self-conscious in that respect.

And you didn't have a house style that you had to conform to?

Well you know some papers use single inverted commas and some use double, you got to know those.

But nothing specifically musical?

No most papers have a sort of rudimentary style sheet and if you knew them that's fine, or the Subs would put them in, that's what they're there for.

But no specific musical style sheet?

No, I mean Fiona and I would have been responsible for producing one if the paper had required it but it never did..

I wondered, with *The Independent* being new, if it had a really firm template of how it wanted its music criticism look, but it sounds like they were quite happy to let all of their writers do their own thing?

Yes. There have been times, Donald Mitchell, the Britten scholar who worked on *The Times* as a young man in the 1950s, said the Chief Critic who was then Frank Howes, took him to one side one day, this was way back in the 1950s, and said 'I see you are reviewing a concert tonight with some Schoenberg in it, this paper has a policy about Schoenberg, we don't like him'. But that was an extreme example. That's the reactionary spirit of the 1950s which I mentioned earlier on. Donald often tells that story and I'm sure it's in print somewhere actually and it's not uncharacteristic of that period, but I've never heard of anything like that more recently. I don't think the editorial people care enough about classical music to even worry about Schoenberg, they wouldn't know who he is let alone have a policy about him.

... (Part B) ...

Just one question that I like to ask at the end, which is just to say that I'm looking at changes in broadsheet criticism between 1981 – 1991, have I missed any of the possible causes for change during that period, is there is anything that you think I should've covered?

Cultural, economic, musical, social. I think we've covered them all in one way or another. Creative.

Do you think you could sum up in a sentence, or possibly two, what the key changes were in broadsheet music criticism in that period?

I think the view has gained ground, whether rightly or wrongly, in the media that what is called classical music has lost cultural relevance and therefore is less and less deserving of serious coverage or space. Which is very pessimistic. I think that's the old *précis* coming out.

In one of your emails you included a wonderful section and I wondered if I could quote that, you said "the most drastic changes in broadsheet classical criticism have taken place since rather than during 1981 to 1991. I refer in particular to the marginalisation of serious features and the squeezing of review space to make room for preview material, interviews with opera singers is often covertly hand in glove with artists record companies, i.e. publicity rather than independent comment".

Yes you can use that if you like, I stand by that. (2h37m54)

Interview with Meredith Oakes
At her home in Streatham, London. 26th August 2006

Part A

So you must have been one of the very first classical writers at *The Independent*? (0m47)

I wasn't the very first, they appointed Bayan Northcott as a sort of main music critic. They always had a different policy from the other papers; I think right from the start they just wanted to have an occasional bunch of music critics, they weren't really trying to build anyone's profile in particular. They kept it very loose and they just had freelancers. But they did have Bayan as 'on salary' I think. I was one of the people he asked at some point to do some stuff for them. But they had coverage of classical music right from the start as far as I know.

Did they say 'we're a new publication and this is the style we want you to adopt', were they quite prescriptive about what they wanted at the start?

No, not at all. Absolutely not at all. Obviously if they didn't like what you did you wouldn't get asked again, but you just sort of did it and saw how it worked out. On a review by review basis rather than giving you an overall style to aim for? Yes. Did they give you guidance on house style or anything like that that you had to comply with?

I don't remember anything really. The only style things were what hard information you had to put in and I think that's it. I think that's the only thing. So you had a great deal of freedom then? Yes.

With regards to classical music criticism, did you feel that there was a canonical style of writing that you had to conform to?

It's a funny thing that, because nobody tells you so, nobody suggests that's the case, and if you were a really, really sort of liberated person you could write any damn thing and so long as you wrote it well they would probably not mind. But the funny thing is you feel that people's eyes are on you. You see I started writing music criticism when I was really young, when I was just a young girl in Sydney, and I'd just done my music degree, and I knew a bit, I thought I knew a lot in some ways, but in other ways I was very ignorant, you know I hadn't heard loads of stuff, loads of kind of normal everyday performances. I felt a great urge to cover up my youth and ignorance with a sort of confident, easy flowing, multi-referential style and I'd refer to things and compare things where I didn't really always know what I was talking about. I think the temptation in journalism is always to feign confidence because you feel that if you don't give the impression of knowing what you are doing people won't want to employ you and I think that is the single greatest besetting sin of journalists. But as you go on you get a bit more confident and you're not afraid to admit ignorance so much. But since new journalists are coming along all the time this same problem comes along every time and you read these frightfully confident assertions in newspapers about all sorts of things and if you can read between the lines a bit you can quite often see that the person knows bugger all about it. So I put that pressure on myself I think, I don't think anybody really puts it on you. I don't know because I never made the experiment, I never wrote reviews saying I know absolutely nothing about this composer or this piece of music, although I did come close. I don't know what would happen. I think Editors are only really interested in how good your writing is, how appealing it is to a casual reader, not a specialist reader, stress that, a casual reader. So they really don't mind about all these other things that are churning away in your own mind about 'am I going to be shown up', but they do churn just the same. (5m39)

So was it Bayan Northcott who was the Arts Editor?

He wasn't the Arts Editor but he was the Chief Music Critic, I don't know if that's the title they gave as they were quite keen to get away from that old structure. You'd have to ask him, but I think they had him on salary from the start and I think he was the only one who was on salary. But again you'd have to check that.

So was there an Arts Editor or did they not have one?

Yes, there were various ones. In fact the one that was Arts Editor when I was doing it, in fact you would be able to date it by this, was Tom Sutcliffe, not this Tom Sutcliffe, the other one. So I was actually married to and working for a Tom Sutcliffe. He'd be a very interesting person to talk to because I think that he's got some feeling about quality and he does actually care about what goes on. I think he still does a lot of radio, he does television sometimes, he kind of stepped down from being an Editor of his own volition I think and just started writing big articles and things for the paper. I

suspect he's been secretly writing a novel or something but he didn't really want that position in the end I think. He did it for a while and he did it very well.

So you were saying they weren't particularly hands on or prescriptive?

No. In fact I remember a really nice meeting. He called in the critics just to have a drink at one point, and that's becoming increasingly unknown in newspapers, it's got more and more faceless I think as the years have gone by. I don't now, I'm not up to date now, I mean maybe it's all changed now. But he invited everyone in and we had a cup of tea or drink or something, and he confessed that he was doing first grade piano, he was kind of learning. Which I thought was really sweet actually.

So when *The Independent* started did you get a sense of whether there was a hierarchy between the different music genres, rock and pop, jazz, world music, classical, and if so who was at the top and who was at the bottom?

I think that depends on whose mind you were inhabiting at the time. But I think even at that stage, in the mid 1980s, the coverage for rock and pop was well ahead of the coverage of classical music.

So rock and pop at the top of the hierarchy, and you think they were given priority?

Yes, they got the most space. I mean some days were devoted to one kind of area and other days were devoted to another, but rock and pop got the most space, although not for reviewing so much as the whole coverage, there were far more interviews, pictures, general stuff. It's always been quite hard to get features about classical music into newspapers and it's got harder and harder.

And presumably that was some kind of editorial decision to maybe differentiate *The Guardian* and *The Times*?

No *The Guardian* was going very much the same way, they were all going the same way actually. I don't know about *The Times* because I never read *The Times*. (10m05)

Yes, I seem to recall that *The Guardian* had a lot of rock and pop during the 1980s.

I think that led the way actually. *The Guardian* was quite keen to broaden its appeal as much as possible and also try to get a younger readership. Though I always thought that was a fallacy because young people are not going to buy a newspaper because they can read a review of a rock concert in it. Why would they? I mean they go to the rock concert. Anyway, that's another issue.

This is really a question that I've been asking people who were around between 1981 – 1991, but I'm interested in whether there was a change in the type of articles you were being asked to write?

Whether the number of reviews tailored off or maybe you were asked to write more features over time?

Well for me on *The Independent* I was just writing a couple of reviews a week. I never proposed any features because I was quite keen to do as little work as possible. I don't think there was a change though.

In *The Independent*, did you find that you were often getting pictures with your work?

That was rare, very rare. But if there were pictures it's always the same thing, it's more likely to be operatic than anything else because there's just more stuff easily available to put in the paper. And I did have a slight specialisation I suppose, they did slightly divide up who they commissioned according to what subject area you were doing and I kind of got a load of string players and also a lot of new music, because I was a string player and because people were quite reluctant to write about new music. And they already had people who were very knowledgeable about keyboard and various other genres. It wasn't hard and fast but it did slightly divide up according to specialisation. (12m59)

Do you have a view on how *The Independent* may have affected music criticism in other broadsheets, *The Times* and *The Guardian* in particular?

I doubt that it did. I mean they both had much bigger circulations than *The Independent*. They never really got worried about *The Independent* I don't think. And that would be a very minor area of concern for them, the music coverage. I certainly don't see any evidence. *The Guardian* and *The Times* didn't change their more hierarchical arrangement as a result of what *The Independent* did. All of those papers have shrunk their coverage as the years have gone on but I don't know who started it.

My theory at least was that *The Independent* would want to differentiate itself from *The Guardian* and *The Times* and perhaps be really quite radical, and that it would be watching the other papers to see if

they were following in its footsteps. Did it set out to be radical and different in terms of music coverage?

I don't know because I wasn't an insider in any way at all. My guess is that the radicalism resided more in the way they made their internal arrangements, like this idea of not having such a hierarchy, having more loose ranging coverage and that probably, if one really thinks about it, had a financial basis, they were trying to do it as on the cheap as they could. But there was a sort of thought that creating pundits wasn't a particularly noble thing to be doing, it was better to have a lively array of different styles, so that was quite different from the other papers. But I think it's because the area wasn't very important, they do have pundits when it comes to politics and foreign affairs, and it's very hard to get away from that format because name recognition means an awful lot actually. (16m10)

Were there any other publications that came onto the market in the late 1980s that influenced either your work personally as a music writer or perhaps the stance of *The Independent's* coverage of music?
I don't know. I mean all of the broadsheets have spent the last twenty years chasing the youth market and obviously there were youth magazines on the scenes. I wonder actually if *Time Out* wasn't an influence on *The Independent*, because it had that same sort of scattergun approach to reviews coverage didn't it.

And the Wapping Dispute was obviously in 1986, which was before *The Independent*.

Well *The Independent* resulted from Wapping. But *The Independent* was sort of trying to stand up for solid journalistic values and not go the Murdoch way, it tried to avoid hype, hard-selling and celebrity culture. (18m01)

Again, broad question, but Thatcherism and the political climate of the time. Did that affect your writing in any way in terms of perhaps what was available in terms of the music that was out there for you to go and review?

There certainly seemed to be less going on through the Thatcher years, less and less. Less to write about, reviews were encouraged to be shorter as well. There was absolutely no embarrassment about taking up a big chunk of an arts page for an advertisement, whereas there might have been at least some slight coyness about doing it before the Thatcher years. It just generally got a bit more hard-nosed.

You said that reviews were encouraged to be shorter and shorter. Did you get a feeling for what was driving that?

Well, partly just space, partly trying to maximise advertising space. Partly a sort of reaction, and not entirely unjustified, against people pontificating and sort of thinking what they had to say was frightfully important. That wasn't altogether unhealthy because before that people who ponced on about music were rather a protected species, they could really say an incredible number of silly things and regard themselves as rather important in the scheme of things. That kind of went when financial measures started to dictate how everyone saw things. It was very much in the forefront of people's minds that what you were talking about was a minority interest and you were talking about it in again a very minority way; I mean you were a minority within a minority. The idea that the validity of an art form bore some relation to how many people liked it was a fairly new idea. That was definitely a Thatcherite idea, which has its bad and good sides, but that's a couple of days conversation on that one. You know when you start saying 'let the market decide' then obviously all kinds of things happen. (21m37)

Another broad question, but were there any changes in music media that affected your writing from 1987 to 1991, technology changes, anything like that?

I had done a lot of record reviewing in the years before that but I kind of wasn't doing it by then, so the whole technological thing sort of passed me by.

It's often said that rock music criticism in particular declined during the 1980s, do you have any sense of there ever being a decline in the quality of classical music writing?

Yes, if you're talking about the quality of ideas and the complexity of what was being discussed, the variety of vocabulary, just the general, you know. If you see a flower flourishing it's got a lot of leaves, a lot of branches, a lot of delicate variation. If it's a bit more stressed then the variety and delicacy is less, and that definitely happened, yes. During the 1980s? Yes.

What do you think was driving that change?

Well some of the things I've mentioned, the fact that you had to write at less length, I mean that above all, and the fact that there was less appetite for a piece of journalism which was just there to talk about ideas. By the end of the 1980s you practically never saw an article just saying 'oh, this new recording of something has stimulated me to think about that other composer there and how their styles were similar and, you know, this music movement took a particular turn then' you know that sort of article was virtually extinct. So think-pieces, there wasn't really any room for them. So it was very much just kind of tactical, 'there's a concert, write 300 words about it, bang'. (24m27)

I think you just mentioned music advertising, but how did that affect music writing in *The Independent*?

There was never, well not to me, and I don't think for anyone, there was never any suggestion that you had to pull your punches because anyone was advertising. But then the kind of things we were writing about, they weren't big advertisers anyway. That's why one had a sort of, in one's tiny pond, one had a lot of freedom because it really didn't matter.

So you weren't getting phone calls saying 'we might be able to place an advert for x, y, or z and therefore we need you to go and review something so we can tie it in to the advert and make more money'?

No, no, because how many concert promoters take significant advertising space in broadsheets, they just don't.

...(Part B)...

Is there anything else, as I say I'm looking at changes in broadsheet music journalism between 1981-1991, is there anything you think I'm missing or should have covered?

Any sort of general comment? Yes.

No, I don't think I'd be able to say anything that loads of other people won't be saying as well. I mean there's this constant driving anxiety in the broadsheets that they're steadily losing circulation and they don't know quite where it will bottom out, and the response to that all through the period we've been talking about has been to try and get a younger and more general readership, and I think that's produced some anomalies. For instance there was a shift away from wanting highly musically educated people to be writing music reviews, they wanted somebody that wouldn't ever use a term that wasn't understood by the general reader, and the idea of that was that your reader kind of opens the paper and reads it all through and should be able to land anywhere and feel perfectly at home and comfortable. I mean I think that's just kind of hysteria really. I think the people that open music reviews and read them do it because they're interested in music and they quite like an informed opinion. But as I say it's such a tiny area of newspapers, it doesn't really matter. But that was the sort of general hysterical view which has made most of the changes happen that I've talked about, you know, the stuff getting shorter, it was that they should all be absolutely intelligible to anyone and that specialist knowledge was a disadvantage rather than an advantage.

So like what some people might call a 'dumbing down'?

Yes, I mean that was a quite concrete instance of it yes. I mean dumbing down is a such a loose term. They say the population's IQ has gone up by twenty five per cent in the last thirty years or whatever it is, so all of these things are two edged swords, but as far as the quality of ideas getting into print goes, there's been a struggle in certain areas, and largely on the basis that if it's too specialised no newspaper wants it, even if it's a subject that has followers who are quite specialised.

So the idea of making everything more accessible to the wider audience.

Yes as if every reader reads every page. I mean I just don't think that's a valid analysis of how people read newspapers, but maybe I'm wrong. They have an awful lot of people doing research into these things. (45m11)

I guess it's difficult to know who you are writing for, whether you are writing for someone who you know is going to read that page or if you are trying to grab the attention of someone who is just passing through?

Yes, I think you can do both. But I never read a whole newspaper. But anyway...

I've had real trouble tracking down *Independent* writers actually.

Yes because we're such an obscure bunch.

Interview with Robert Sandall
At his Work Premises in London. 27th June 2006

Part A

Can you just tell me about the style and approach that you adopted with your writing for the *Sunday Times*. Did you absorb a style that was already out there or were you actively trying to create something new with your writing? Where did the style come from if you like?

Well the style was dictated by my sense of who I was writing for and I thought that I was writing for people who were older than teenagers for the most part but, more than their age, defined by the fact that they probably needed to have a lot of stuff explained to them. At the time I started, which was around 1986, I hadn't written for anyone else before that except for a couple of reviews for the *Daily Telegraph*. But I started more or less in the *Sunday Times* and I saw the role really as explaining something which had, ever since punk, become harder and harder for people to understand. We're were talking at that time about the fragmentation of the market into age groups, there were people who liked listening to Phil Collins and there were other people who wouldn't go near a Phil Collins album if you paid them. And there were lots of what were known as indie bands who weren't expecting to be listened to by anyone over the age of twenty five. The consensus, if there ever was one, which there broadly was in the 60s and 70s, had started to fragment. So that being the case, the job I saw that needed to be done for a *Sunday Times* writer was to try and explain whatever you were writing about, try and explain where it had come from, why it was the way it was, but to presume very limited knowledge on the part of the reader. Which was a slightly tiresome thing in many ways because it meant you had to spend whole paragraphs just laying out the groundwork before you actually got on to saying anything about what you were writing about. I was also, personally, writing for people for whom this very well might be the only piece of pop music journalism they read in any given week. That didn't have so much of a bearing on the style so much as what I chose to write about.

I notice that before you came on board Derek Jewell and Simon Frith were covering rock and pop. Derek Jewell died and Simon Frith wrote about pop music for the paper for four or five years, and then, although he denied it, I think it was something to do with the Wapping strike. He stopped writing for them. It was a very big issue in those days because most pop journalists had some kind of fairly overt left wing sympathies and therefore felt that what Murdoch was trying to do with the print unions was unacceptable. I hated the printers so I didn't have any problems of that nature, I was delighted to see them put out of a job and was proud to be part of the process that made it happen. It was scandalous what they got up to. So I was completely unencumbered by those sort of scruples. But I think that's why Simon left. But I wasn't actually appointed rock critic until 1987 I think from memory, so I wrote on and off odd pieces for a year or so before they actually gave me that role. (5m54)

Yes you appear in my database from 1987 onwards.

Yes the first piece I wrote for the *Sunday Times* was almost exactly twenty years ago. The middle of July 1986.

Did you feel that you had to carry on with the style that Derek Jewell or Simon Frith had adopted or did you just bring your own style in?

No. Derek Jewell's style I didn't really pay much attention to, to be honest, and I don't mean that disrespectfully to him. I just didn't, I wasn't overly aware of it. I think I'd read bits and pieces when I was very young. Simon Frith I was much more conscious of, and of course he wrote with a very overtly political, sociological agenda which I did not particularly. I thought he did it very well but I didn't think there was any point in trying to emulate it, and I didn't have the sociological training anyway. And also I had a different interest, I was coming at it from a different point of view, which is I was more interested in the music as a musician and a performer, and so I suppose I was slightly more interested in the formal properties of the music than in its contexts.

I was going to ask what factors shaped your style at that time, but you were saying just then it was your desire to concentrate on the formal musical content, structure that kind of thing?

More, yes. I mean the thing about popular music is to some degree you can't divorce forms and contexts really. I mean its popularity is what defines it to a degree, so therefore you are always writing partly about the audience and what they see in it. (8m14)

During that period 1986/1987 when you started writing for the *Sunday Times*, my database goes up to 1991, did you change your approach during that time, over that period?

I wouldn't say that I changed my approach. As I say I started writing for the *Sunday Times* which is rather a tall order in some respects since I hadn't written professionally before. I was trying to write in an easy and sort of enjoyable way, to keep people's attention really for the duration of the article. So the writing was a learning process I suppose really. I mean I'd studied literature at university and so I was interested in all those questions, rhetorical questions essentially, and yes what I was really trying to do was just make the pieces seem informative but conversational, not too didactic, try to make them fairly light and not too onerous to read. The trick with writing about popular music is to get the tone right, because popular music can touch very deep emotions but also a lot of the time it's not really making that kind of serious bid for people's attention. And sometimes it's almost trying to be throwaway, and so matching your approach to the intention of the music is difficult, well not difficult necessarily but something you have to keep in mind.

Did you ever try to make your style more or less widely accessible?

I always did that. My plan always was that everyone would understand it. I aimed for maximum intelligibility. And I ought to explain actually that an important context was that around this time the music press, which of course was a very small thing in those days really, I mean there weren't all the magazines there are now, the weekly music press was all going, but the people who wrote for the weekly music press were increasingly writing in a kind of code that could only really be properly understood by people who were very close to what they were writing about. That's less true now, it still has to be true to a certain degree, but it was particularly true then. But the *New Musical Express*, which had shed a huge amount of circulation in the six or seven years prior to me starting to write at the *Sunday Times*, was increasingly embattled in its attitudes, there were loads of people that it just would not, as a matter of principle, talk about in any terms at all, not even to be rude about. And I saw myself as being part of a movement to kind of readjust the sort of view finder, in a way, of the music press. Because I started writing almost exactly the same time that *Q* magazine launched which had a similar kind of plan, and I started writing for *Q* as a consequence. But there was a sort of redressing of a sectarian kind of impulse in the music press which again I was quite pleased to be part of because for people of my age, and I was then in my early thirties, it was rather tedious to be lectured the whole time about people that you weren't necessarily terribly interested or likely to come across, while other people you did know something about and were vaguely curious to know what had happened to them were excluded.

Did different sub genres require different modes of writing, so rock, pop and I think I spotted some articles on world music that you'd written?

No. My view was that they should all be written about in the same way because you are writing for the same people so therefore they had to be talked to in the same way. The presumption was that if you thought something was worthy of their attention then you just talked about it in the same kind of (way). The writing is much more about, my imaginary audience than it ever was about the music, I mean obviously the music is what I'm writing about, but the elements I highlight are the elements I think the audience will find most interesting. Just the same as the stuff I wrote about, in many cases it wasn't necessarily my personal taste, it was things which I thought the audience wanted to know about or ought to know about. (14m07)

So how did you and/or your Editor which artists would be covered?

Well that was an ongoing discussion and it was often quite tricky because my first Editor pretended to be very fogeyish, much more so than he was, and he would effect not to know who Pink Floyd were and things like that. Ultimately all these ideas had to be run past the Editor of the newspaper and this is in a context in which there was a tiny fraction of the coverage that there is now in the broadsheets. Now the broadsheets have all got, in some cases, entire sections given over to popular music. In those days you were lucky to get an article and that carried on for a very long time. I don't know if it's of any interest to your piece but, a salient example of this is as recently as the death of Kurt Cobain the *Sunday Times*, which was TV advertising itself that weekend as the largest Sunday newspaper in the history of the world ever, very, very nearly went out two days after Kurt Cobain died without a single reference to his death, not one. Because the news desk phoned me up on the Saturday and they said 'well what about Kurt Cobain?' and I said 'well he's a very big figure', and they said 'yes, well we think it's a Saturday news story', and I said 'well if that's what you think, that's what you think'. And then someone else phoned up and basically said the same thing, and I said 'fine if that's what you think then I'm quite happy to take the weekend off'. And then someone on the foreign news desk twigged it and phoned up and gave me a much longer conversation which meant I had to spend Saturday

afternoon writing a piece about the death of Kurt Cobain. And they came that close to completely blanking it. Now you imagine now what would happen if, who would it be, if Pete Docherty died on Friday half the news section of the *Sunday Times* would be given over to coverage of it. There has been an absolutely enormous change in editorial priorities, and that change, I think, started in the period that you are looking at but it really only kicked in in the 90s.

So to revert to the question you actually asked, it was actually quite difficult to get pieces accepted. It became easier once I'd been made the rock critic and it was apparent that the Editor of the newspaper liked my stuff and I was on a bigger contract, but still everything was a matter of negotiation and negotiation with people who were not particularly sympathetic to the subject. You didn't really feel that popular music was a thing that had any place on the Arts pages, as they were then called, because this was pre *The Culture*, or *Culture* as it now calls itself.

So were you constantly trying to convince them that 'this is the new big thing and we really should include some coverage'?

Yes something like that.

They weren't saying to you 'well actually we disagree and we think you should do this'?

No they didn't. No, no, no, there was none of that. Towards the end of the period that you are dealing with it became a little easier and there even became an appetite for covering people who they weren't familiar with. Initially it was all like 'never heard of them' so they weren't interested. They had to have heard of somebody. Which meant that I spent the first four years doing a lot of stuff on people who were very well known, like Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, well the sort of people that *Q* wrote about.

But as time went on you were able to suggest slightly less well known figures?

Yes, as time went on there became more of an appetite for covering new things, and of course the situation we've arrived at now is one in which the broadsheet press performs a service very similar to the one that used to be supplied by the inkie music press. And from where I was standing in 1987, that is an unimaginable development, extraordinary, how do they do that?

Did you find that, and I don't know how many Editors you had during that period, but did editorial changes occur which kind of opened things up?

Yes there were only two Editors really, that I had in the period you've mentioned, in fact maybe only one actually. Around 1991 was around the time that John Whitley left, he was the Editor. He was an old Harold Evans man who thought that all the things that Andrew Neil was doing to the newspaper, including appointing me as a rock critic, was basically a plot to kind of diminish the arts. So he was a tricky character to deal with. Although he liked me personally and he always seemed relatively appreciative of what I wrote he was fundamentally unsympathetic to what I was writing about. Which actually I have to say, upon reflection, probably had some bearing on the way I wrote, it made me even more careful to kind of explain and justify everything. You could never take anything for granted with him. Maybe that was just him being clever and making sure that that was in my mind as I wrote, I don't know. He was quite a foxy old character like that. (19m52)

So that was always in the back of your mind, that you'd got to be approved?

Well the thing is as a writer, the first person who sees this copy is this guy, or the subs, they're your audience actually, they're your readership. And if they don't like it then you've fallen at the first hurdle.

It must be difficult because you've got to try and find a balance between pleasing the reader and the Editor and I don't know where the musicians themselves come into it and then there's the PR departments as well. But who would you say would be the priority?

Well not the PR department that's for sure. No disrespect to the PR department. But you can't write to their agenda because that would be a disaster. But by the same token, well this is important actually, one of things that I'd identified was that I didn't want to write about things that I was just going to slag off. My perception and my role was that I was trying to draw people's attention to something that would repay it. Because, and this relates to what I said earlier about having a sense that because it was a Sunday newspaper this might be the only piece that this particular person reading the newspaper would read about pop music all week, and therefore you had to choose something that was worthwhile, and that meant not simply rubbishing whatever album but rather saying 'look go and listen to this, this is great'. And odd as it may seem, because the music press was in such a rampant denigratory mood a lot of the time, that seemed like quite a bold thing to do at the time. Much less so now, although of

course it's much easier to write rude things about people than it is to write enthusiastically about them, as everybody who writes knows. (22m)

So would you only write about perhaps artists or bands that you thought were good then?

Yes that was all I wrote about. Unless, I mean obviously if Madonna or somebody played a concert or something you had to write about them, there were certain people that were so big you had to write about them. But outside of that it was a matter of choosing something worth talking about.

I was reading one of your pieces on Rod Stewart actually, I really enjoyed that.

Did you? Was that the long interview when he was in a rather glum mood? Yes, he was on the tour bus. I remember that, a funny interview that. Yes very odd, strange how he was that day.

So you've obviously written for lots of other publications as well, including Q and Mojo and then later on I think The Independent and the Daily Telegraph?

I started writing for the *Daily Telegraph*, that was the first journalism I ever did in 1985, I did a couple of concert reviews for them. And that happened by a kind of accident. I had no particular ambitions at that point to be a journalist and then a year later I revisited the idea and started writing for the *Sunday Times* via somebody I'd met briefly when I wrote for the *Telegraph*. I started writing for *Q* magazine, but I didn't actually write for anyone else much for quite a long time. I wrote for the *Sunday Times* and *Q* and that was more or less it.

So how was writing for the Sunday Times different to, particularly I guess, Q?

Well it was quite different in the sense that with *Q* you were writing to an informed audience and so you could have more fun with them and you could be a bit cheekier and spend a lot less time scene setting and things like that. More relaxed. With the *Sunday Times* there was always a bit of a sense of, you have to sort of sit up straight in your chair and make sure that you are covering everything that you are supposed to mention. I mean I may have over exaggerated that in my own mind, perhaps another person wouldn't have found that such a burden, but I found it very burdensome. Writing articles for the *Sunday Times* for a long time it was difficult, it really was difficult. I didn't really enjoy it. I enjoyed the finished thing, when I'd done it, but I didn't enjoy doing it. Whereas *Q* was a lot more fun and the people I was writing for were my own age and more on my wave length.

Were the Editors a bit more relaxed?

Yes, they were my age, my background, had the same experience of the music and were coming at it from a very similar kind of angle. And *Q* had a house style which was sort of slightly larky and not rude but sort of irreverent, they liked to make jokes and that. (25m46)

Actually I meant to ask about house style. When you were writing for the Sunday Times, how did you pick up on house style? Were you reading the paper before you started writing for them or did the Editor ...?

I always used to read the *Sunday Times* when I was younger and it's just something you imbibe? I mean there is a style sheet and they tell you about words they don't like and things like that, but they do encourage you, especially when you're a critic, to have your own voice. The house style is imposed much more rigorously upon the news reporters. So I wasn't really aware of the house style. There was a guy who wrote for the paper who was very helpful to me and who was a good friend and guide, a bloke called Mick Brown who must have cropped up in your database? Yes. Well basically the reason I started writing for the *Sunday Times* was because Mick Brown had been taken on the staff there with a fairly wide brief, one of the elements of which was covering music, and he wanted to get beyond music and so he was quite keen to have a junior person such as myself, covering it now again when he wasn't. So he would step in there and write about the people he was really interested in, which was a lot of the great RnB stars, like James Brown, if ever they came to town, and I was left doing the sort of more meat and potatoes kind of pop acts, and the rock acts he wasn't so interested in. But anyway, so his style I paid a lot of attention to, not that I tried to copy it because you couldn't copy his style, but just the way he told the story was something I was struck by. The critics and reviewers are encouraged, for obvious reasons, to have their own voice rather than to be speaking as the newspaper. But having said that, if you wrote in too esoteric a way then they wouldn't.... Before I started writing for the *Sunday Times* I was led to understand that a lot of writers from the music press had been tried out but they didn't like them because they found them too, they were too tinged with the esoteric approach of the music press. I had never written for the music press and had no history with them, I think it was the fact I'd never had any history with them that gave me the slight advantage. I don't know that to be the case, but I think that's the case.

So I said earlier that I'd been looking at volumes of different genre coverage, and I'm interested in whether or not there was a hierarchy between different genres in terms of which might gain the most page space or the most dominant position on the page. Did you feel that you were jostling for space or position with other genres, classical or jazz for example?

Not particularly. I think if I'm honest what tended to dictate space was firstly how famous the person you are talking about was, and also what else was happening that week. So for example I noticed that in August when there wasn't an awful lot of other things going on you'd get more space than you would in October. But, yes the jazz guides I suppose, well Richard Cook who you spoke to, I never really felt we were competing with each other I must say, but we might have been. That kind of stuff isn't really passed on to you as a writer. You never knew whether the space had been allocated on the basis of what you'd actually written or what they'd already thought about, the importance of this person or indeed whether some senior Editor had come in and said 'oh well she's a woman, we need a bit more female presence on the page so let's print that picture of her bigger'. There's all sorts of calculations that newspapers make which go way beyond anything to do with what the writer, or even his immediate Editor think. (31m19)

Did you see the *Culture* section, you know that thing with Ainara George (check spelling) on the cover of the *Sunday Times*? Well that was chosen by the Editor of the newspaper for no other reason than he liked her picture. She'd played in London recently and I was in the audience and there were ten people there, and I'd actually done an interview with her for the *Telegraph*. In terms of popularity she's off the radar, hardly anyone has heard of her. She got up there, and the Editor hasn't listened to her album, but he's looking at all the covers of his sections and thinks 'I need another woman, she looks good, we'll have her'. And that's how the decision was made, and that's how the decisions have always been made at the *Sunday Times*, and to a degree at other publications as well. So factor that into your considerations. Your questions which are all referenced around the music, are not the way in which newspapers, well something like the *Observer Music Monthly* it might be how they, which is a completely discrete section, but something which is jostling initially within the arts and beyond that, within the overall shuffle of the newspaper sections.

So it's not just about genre.

It's not a genre thing. I mean newspapers being what they are, I mean if you're dealing with a young attractive woman they're more likely to print a big picture of her than some gnarly old bloke essentially. So it depends on who you are covering then? They're much more likely to print a picture of someone big and famous than they are of somebody who isn't.

Did you notice the use of pictures increasing while you were there, with your articles, and did you always know if you were going to get a picture or not?

I was usually aware of it yes. That was one of the things they liked about what I wrote about, was that it was very picture friendly. That was one of the good things about pop music. And yes, if I were covering something live, which I quite often was in the early days, there's hardly any live coverage in the *Sunday Times* now as you probably know, but there was quite a bit then and yes they'd always take pictures. A lot of the early features I wrote were based around linked concert reviews essentially. So did the photographer come out with you whilst you were at a gig or something? No they'd usually buy them separately. Very occasionally I'd meet them if I was interviewing somebody, but usually they were separate.

I noticed that there seemed to be a bit of an increase in the use of pictures, but I guess that's coming from the Editors isn't it, or the increase in space perhaps?

The Independent had a big influence on that. When it started it used big black and white pictures that sort of encouraged everyone to think. I thought that might be the case because when it entered the market it seemed to use a lot of pictures straight away. It also took music quite seriously as well. *The Independent's* music coverage was something which I think had an influence on other newspapers. I remember it having an influence.

Just before I move on from this idea of a hierarchy, did you feel that journalists writing for different genres were treated differently or was there any favouritism or anything like that?

Oh yes, you were definitely at the bottom of the pile.

So rock at the bottom of the pile. Who was at the top?

The theatre critic probably. The *Sunday Times* had loads of music critics and yes I mean the classical guys would get first dibs on the good space although increasingly I think the Editor started to question

that, the Editor of the newspaper not the Editor of the section. I suppose the period you are talking about was a period of crossover in terms of the way that music was perceived. It went in that period from being very much 'oh well we'd better do something on this just to keep the younger readers happy', it was done grudgingly basically, but by the end of the period it was being embraced and it was being seen as a core to the arts coverage as it is now. I mean now you've got separate days in which, I mean the *Telegraph* has three pages of music coverage on a Thursday and they don't have a visual arts three page spread. Well that would have been inconceivable then in the period you are talking about.

Just quickly did you notice any changes in the types of articles that you were being asked to write during that period?

Well I wasn't asked to write very many articles, I chose them. So I was sort of second guessing them. In that five year period I mostly noticed that I wrote more, and I was less interrogated about what I wrote about. I mean to be honest you've probably got better information on what I did write about in that period that I can recall frankly, because it is quite a long time ago. But yes my sense was that it became much more easy to get my ideas accepted. And that was also partly just getting used to the role and understanding how the newspaper worked and becoming more familiar with the music scene itself. (37m55)

Before I started doing the quantitative analysis I had a theory that people who were writing from 1981 to 1991 mostly started off by writing reviews but by the end of the decade they were writing more previews because of shifts in marketing?

Well that could very well be. That's probably what happened with me. And also the print deadlines came forward on the Sunday papers. I can't remember when the arts became a separate stand-alone supplement in the *Sunday Times*, sometime towards the end of the period you're looking at I think. That definitely meant for me that there was less live review and more feature stuff. That was the definite tendency, which would've started. Because when I started writing there was nearly always some kind of live event which I was reporting on, and by the end it was as you say it was more like interviewing Rod Stewart on the eve of his British tour or the release of his album or whatever it might be. So it was more general feature-led and less review orientated. Strangely of course in the period you're talking about the *Sunday Times* hardly had any album reviews at all, in fact in only started album reviews on a regular basis long after I'd given up being the rock critic.

There's an idea that with rock criticism, something deteriorated during the 1980s. There's a book by Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write*, and he talks about these shifts that happened during the 80s, do you think there was ever a golden age of rock criticism, and if so when was it?

I think I probably do. I think that the writing in the 1970s was really good and the reasons for that were partly to do with the access that journalists had to the musicians themselves, and they were able to go on the road with people and get much closer to it. They felt much closer to it because pop and rock weren't as diffuse as they are now, as they have become. But it's generally, there's a grain of deep familiarity with the subject that you get in that 70s period, with Lester Bangs and all those semi-mythical names. In the 80s it did become much more a branch of the marketing department. I was very conscious of that, that I had nothing like the access to the artists. I was really being called upon to help to flog a concert or an album or whatever it might be. So Gorman's book, and I used to know Paul Gorman slightly, and his thesis is essentially that it's just been a long deterioration is it? Well that may be true. Because the thing that happened is that it's become steadily professionalized, because most of the people, and I count myself at the tail end of this, most rock critics sort of did it because they saw they couldn't do anything else and they were hooked on the music, and then in the 80s it gradually became much more something that people set out to do as part of a media career and I suppose yes that did make the writing rather bland and less interesting. (42m31)

Did you have a specific date or event in mind when you think things might have changed for the better or worse?

I think the entire perception of popular/ rockular music, whatever you want to call it, changed quite dramatically around the time of Live Aid. And I don't think that's a very controversial thing to say. Lots of things changed; attendance at stadium concerts went up; the whole idea that rock and pop music was in some way a sort of counter culture thing which had sort of stumbled along for the best part of twenty years, there was a major realignment of thinking on that. To see so many of these familiar big names on the stage feeding the world and all the rest of it, big media event, good old Bob Geldof, Sir Bob Geldof as he became, that heralded a seismic change in the thinking. And like all

those things, it would probably have happened anyway but it certainly gave a focus to it. So I think 1985, it made it much more socially acceptable that it ever had been before.

And so somehow that sort of diluted the quality?

It took a lot of the kind of counter-cultural cache away, and it acknowledged the fact that pop and rock music was really a part of the larger family of entertainment really. Show-business. Which of course, you know, for fifteen or twenty years since rock had first been invented it had prided itself on being something quite separate. (45m02)

So music advertising, did you notice any change in music advertising at the *Sunday Times* or the broadsheets generally?

You mean the stuff that got advertised in the newspaper itself? Yes. Well at the *Sunday Times* the vast majority of its advertising is for concerts. It's a big message board for upcoming concerts and it always has been and it still is. And I didn't notice any change in that. You hardly ever see adverts for albums in the *Sunday Times*, it's live events. I don't know where that tradition came from, you'd probably need to speak to someone in sales and marketing, they'd probably know. But it is just the place where anyone who's got any substance who's got a tour coming up sticks an advert in the *Sunday Times*.

So no change? That has been fairly consistent?

As far as I'm aware.

Did any kind of music marketing affect your articles or writing in any way? (46m20)

It's hard to say. I mean as I said to you I did become more aware that I was essentially part of the marketing (process), the press had become, it always was, but it had become part of the marketing push on specific products. You were always aware of the fact that whenever anyone was being offered up for interview there was a reason, they weren't just doing it because they wanted to explain something about the way they were thinking about music, it was because they had something to flog.

And was that the same throughout the period?

It became more intense and it's become increasingly intense, as a result of more and more coverage. You see one important change that's happened, another sort of slow train coming as it were over the period you are talking about and also beyond, was that as more and more coverage became available the power relationship between the PR's and the writers changed. You see when I was writing towards the end of the period I was the power person because I decided, if I decided I was going to interview so and so for the *Sunday Times* well that was a big deal for the PRs because there still weren't that many outlets and certainly not outlets with the circulation of the *Sunday Times*, and I was the only person doing it. Now, every one of the broadsheets has got entire sections given over to music so the PRs are the ones are the ones who can choose so 'hmm, shall we go for the front of *The Telegraph* magazine or the front of *G2*?'. So they have this range of options available for their larger artists which just weren't available back then. Was I aware of a change in marketing? Only that marketing became, it was the sort of thing I was writing about more, it very often became the focus of the piece, would become how this thing is being presented so you felt very often that you were writing less about the intrinsic qualities of the music and more about where it was being punted.

And you were saying that when you started off that was your personal aim, to try and talk about the music itself.

Yes, talking about music is difficult because providing verbal analogues of something that is essentially non verbal is always tricky. But I certainly wanted to draw people's attention to quality of the music rather than to talk about the kind of people who might be listening to it, and that was one of the ways in which I wrote. The emphasis of my writing was different from that of my predecessor Simon Frith who was as I say, as a trained academic sociologist, a lot more interested in that. (49m42)

We've already touched briefly upon the Wapping Dispute, but how did the industrial climate and particularly the Wapping Dispute affect your writing and/ or your career?

Lots of people wouldn't talk to me. Really? Yes, loads of people wouldn't talk to me. Journalists? No artists. I remember famously, two or three years afterwards, I was taken down to Brighton by the press people who represented the Housemartins, and the drummer of the Housemartins, who it is often forgotten is the man who subsequently became Fat Boy Slim, Quentin Cook, or Norman Cook as he called himself as he thought Quentin was too middle class a name, and he wouldn't talk to me. I'd been brought all the way down to Brighton to meet him by this nice young press person, and he simply

refused to talk to me. This happened quite a lot. There was a lot of animosity. Because like I said, in those days, especially for the younger ones, being in a rock band was still felt to entail a political stance. No there were lots of people who wouldn't talk to the *Sunday Times*. That incident sticks in my mind as the most direct but there were loads of them. Sarah Jane Morris, I did a profile of her. Yes I've seen that one. Well she wouldn't talk to the *Sunday Times* but they wanted to do her anyway so I did do a sort of lame profile. Who else, oh, there's too many to mention. Oh Dick Gaughan, he wouldn't talk to me. He's a Scottish folk singer who I went to review as part of a Glasgow Arts Festival. It was a very live issue for most of the end of the 80s basically. Hard to imagine now.

What about from a technology point of view? Did it change your working practices in any way?

I didn't have any working practice because I didn't work as a journalist before. So my experience of unions had been almost universally bad, both as a member of a union, and I was a member of the musicians union for a while, and as a member of the public, in terms of the way unions treated people who weren't union members. I was basically anti-union, but that's a separate issue. Did my working practices change? Well they did once I got a computer. It took me a while to get a computer because I'm the opposite of an early adopter so I'm a late adopter, and I didn't get a computer until 1990. So a lot of the articles you're reading I don't have copies of anymore so I don't even know what they are, so yes for most of the time I would write these articles out in long hand often on rolls of plain lining paper, I mean wallpaper, because I used to find I could write modules and then I would read them over to copy. (53m49)

Are these what you call copy takers?

Yes, that's what I used to do. And then of course that all changed once I got my Mac and became a computer person.

So that wasn't enforced by the newspaper?

No, it was just something I chose to do. But before that it was all done via copy takers. All that I was aware of the Wapping Dispute doing was actually putting money, which had previously gone into the pockets of these mendacious and idle printers, was made available for editorial and there was more space. Suddenly you noticed that in the wake of the (dispute), because of course the *Sunday Times* took the flak for doing it, but all the other newspapers leapt in on the back of it and it was rank hypocrisy the way in which *Sunday Times* journalists would be sneered at by writers for *The Guardian* and *The Observer* all of whom were reaping exactly the same benefits but hadn't actually taken the first steps to make it happen, there was more space now, newspapers could be made bigger, which meant that more people like me would be paid to fill the page. So it was good news for freelance writers, which is essentially what I was. But because I'd joined literally just after the Wapping Dispute had happened I wasn't aware of what had been going on before so the change, if it was a change, was not something I was aware of.

What about Thatcherism generally and the political climate of the time did that affect your writing or your career in any way?

Not really because as I say I tended not to write much about the larger context of the music. The *Sunday Times* was very much seen as a Thatcherite newspaper and its Editor Andrew Neil was a very ardent supporter of Thatcher. But as I said it didn't seem to impinge on what I wrote, I wrote quite a bit about people like Sarah Jane Morris and artists whose opinions were not those of the newspaper, it didn't seem to impinge very much.

So you weren't restricted in any way?

No, not that I was aware. And they were always quite receptive whenever I wanted to cover black artists, which wasn't very often, but I did do it. No I don't think there was any obvious, well why there would there be, it's the arts after all. I think the most important thing Thatcherism did do was it enabled Murdoch to break the power of the unions which really did change the shape and face of newspaper production. That was a big thing and that wouldn't have happened under Labour. So that's a very, very large sort of, well it's background but it's big background.

What about any of the wider music media changes, things like MTV coming along, video recorders, stereo, compact discs?

Compact disc was big, that was a huge thing. What compact disc did very interestingly, and this is one of the things that Q realised, was it focussed people's minds on the history of the genre. So it suddenly became much more accepted and fashionable to look back, because for a long time pop music really was about the latest thing. And then around the time of compact disc, and it wasn't just compact disc it

was the age of the people who'd grown up with it, suddenly everyone became slightly more retrospective in their approach, or if not actually retrospective there was a sense in which the whole thing was a continuous present. I mean when Sergeant Pepper was released on CD it went back into the charts again. So the past suddenly came steaming back into the present again which it hadn't for quite a while. And that had a big effect on, obviously the way that people such as myself wrote, and the entire orientation of people's attitude towards popular music. So once somebody's got a history like that it becomes a bit more like some of the other arts, it becomes more respectable and this again relates to what I was saying about Live Aid. I would say the two big events of the 80s, were the advent of CD and Live Aid. They're the big two. And a lot of the sort of things we've been talking about stemmed from those changes because of that and Thatcherism in terms of the way in enabled newspapers to put a different priority in place. (1h03m00)

This sort of ties into what we were saying at the beginning, but did you consider yourself to be in a particular tradition of journalism. Did you see a canon of music writers that you were following on from?

Not really. I'd quite like to have done. But no, if I thought at all about that I think I would have thought I was doing something rather different, which was a lot less glamorous, just writing for people who'd grown up with music and sort of been left behind by it but were still potentially interested and wanted to have it talked about in a way that they could understand and not as I said in one of these esoteric codes that had become, I mean the music press in the 80s, which is not what you're writing about obviously, but a lot of the broadsheet coverage was in one way or another related to that, either in terms of aping it or in my case writing as far away, in terms of intelligibility, as you could. Those early 80s *NME* writers such as Paul Morley and Ian Penman in particular, who were big figures in the world of pop journalism, did a lot to kind of confuse people one way or another. They were very stylish writers in many ways but they were sort of blowing a smoke screen across things in many cases, to most people.

I was going to ask as well about these newly emerging publications, so *Q* magazine, *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* and then of course *The Modern Review*, but that's right at the end of my period in 1991. Particularly *Q* of course because that came about in the middle. How do you think they influenced the broadsheets, particularly the *Sunday Times*?

I don't know if they influenced the broadsheets actually. I think the arrival of *Q* was borne out of the same kind of impulse that led the broadsheets to perhaps increase their coverage, which I suppose they did, or to look in a slightly more friendly way towards it. I mean don't forget *Q* is a huge brand now but it wasn't when it started. I can remember when *Q* first posted a circulation of about 40,000 or something and everyone was like 'oh, great', but it was tiny. And it only became big by about 1990, 1991, something like that. So I don't think it really did have much of an influence at first, I wouldn't say. I mean influence is a hard thing to gauge obviously, I mean people did read it, they were aware of it, and they almost certainly liked it because in the same way that what I had set myself out to do was write intelligibly, and *Q* had a very strict rule that you couldn't write anything even remotely kind of pretentious or obscure, everything had to be completely transparent and it had to be sort of funny and blokey and down the pubby and so on. *Q* definitely had a house style. But I wouldn't necessarily say it had an influence on the broadsheets I just think that they were both feeding off an awareness that there was now a grown-up audience for pop music who did not want to have it taught to them as though it were some kind of teenage cult thing. We're talking about an audience of people who were now in their thirties who were teenagers when Jimi Hendrix died and they knew all about that rock stuff and they weren't going to be lectured now by people trying to persuade them that some band they'd never heard of was a more important thing than the Beatles, which was the kind of thing that the music press was doing at that point. So *Q* had a particular agenda where that's concerned. It wasn't so much the broadsheets that had that agenda but the people who were writing for them now, the Editors were of the age that they had grown up with music so they were more sympathetically disposed towards it. More clued up? Yes.

What about *The Independent*? You said earlier that it was quite significant.

My impression was that it was quite important yes, because they had this music page. They had a Tuesday music feature and I think they were the first people to really allocate space to music in that way. So like every Tuesday there'd be Dave Hill, as it usually was, writing a big feature. Have you tried to contact him? He'd be an interesting person to talk to. He's become a popular writer now, writes for the *Guardian*. But he was appointed *The Independent's* pop critic and he would write these big essays. He was very much in the Simon Frith sort of sociological school and he tended to like things that had some kind of relationship to some underclass interest or ethnic minority interest or

something like that. But he was given good space and that was noticed, I think. Because *The Independent*, well that was something the broadsheets took notice of, because it was a newspaper and it was a highly successful new launch newspaper. It had quite a seismic influence when it started, influential way beyond its circulation, because it never had that large a circulation, but it was very much the sort of thing that other journalists paid attention to. And again I wasn't privy to these conversations but my impression is that once *The Independent* started giving serious regular space to music everyone else felt they had to do the same. That was much more influential than *Q* magazine. (1h07m45)

Did you consider writing for the broadsheets, or *Sunday Times*, to be a better or worse position than writing for the specialist music press and why?

Oh much better. Much better, because you got paid better. I mean music journalism in the specialist newspapers is not as very good living. You see I'd played in bands in things and I'd never had any particular desire when I was doing that to be a journalist, I always thought it was a better thing to be a musician. But once I decided to give journalism a go, which was a rather accidental decision it wasn't something I set out to do, I instinctively felt that I would rather write for, not the audience of the specialist press but write for this broader audience and sort of explain things more to them. That's what I always wanted to do. I mean *Q* was quite specialist enough for me. (1h10m00)

... (Part B) ...

I got the impression that sometimes with editorial staff, you could submit something and that they would tweak it, did that cause a problem? Did you ever think 'that's not what I intended' and they've misrepresented you?

No they never did that. No, they sometimes cut pieces but I never felt that the piece had been interfered with in the way you've suggested. That's much more of a middle-market kind of tabloid thing. The news section is more apt to do that, but *The Culture* and the features pages, where I did most of my work, weren't like that. So they didn't interfere with your work too much? Or if they did they would always ask my permission first.

I've sometimes read an article which reads like a feature or a profile of somebody and then at the end there's a little chunk in italics saying when their next live concert is, and I often wonder if it's the Editor that's put that on there?

Oh sometimes they ask you to put that in, usually that's done at their discretion really.

I wondered if they'd ask you to do a preview on whoever, whether you would know that they were going to link it into a promotion?

When you are actually presenting the piece to them, then usually they want to know that there is such a peg. This is why they're doing it now, so and so's concert tour or album is coming up. That's one of the ways in which the marketing people and the editorial people have sort of conspired to make that happen.

Is there anything else that you think I should've asked about or covered with this topic?

I don't think so. I think we've covered loads.

If you do then you've got my email in case anything comes to mind, or if you think 'I really shouldn't have said that

Well the one thing we haven't mentioned is that for the period you're talking about nearly all the writers in the broadsheets were male. If not all of them.

I think Hilary Finch was one of my female writers.

I guess I'm talking about pop music, because pop goes just across the board. Jazz self-evidently, because women don't tend to like jazz very much. Classical, yes Hilary Finch would be the one exception that proves the rule. Fiona Maddocks I think wrote about classical music as well. But in the pop field it was a boys club. Very much so, and I'm not sure if that, I don't know I've never really thought about it, and I certainly wasn't aware of it at the time, I don't know if the fact that it was written about exclusively by men sort of slightly affected the kind of things we might have written about. I guess it means that we were probably, as a group, much less friendly to pop music than we might otherwise have been. But that's a thought you can pursue.

Actually, there is just one more question, going back to his idea of decline. Does the quality of your writing, depend on the quality of the artist of the band that you're reviewing?

Yes, I suppose it does. I mean I tend to find it much, much more difficult to write about people I really admire than I do about people I have not particularly strong views about. I think most people find that's the case. You feel much more, you know you have to get it just right. You feel more personally engaged in it and again, music's not an easy thing to write about and the more engaged and caught up in something you are the harder it is to provide these verbal analogues for it. There is that saying, I can never remember who it's ascribed to, Frank Zappa, that thing about writing about music is like dancing about architecture. It's a particular problem which theatre critics don't have, even dance critics and art critics don't have. You're writing descriptively about a descriptive medium and music isn't really at core a descriptive medium. It delivers an extraordinary experience and trying to render that extraordinary experience can be very hard when you've been really sort of affected by it. Much easier to be sort of slightly semi-dismissive. (1h40m14)

I wonder if there's a sense that, if something has declined or changed in the quality of music criticism, it is actually a reflection of a decline in the quality of the music itself?

I don't know if I buy that idea really. There's much, much more music now. There's twice as many CDs released now as there were ten years ago and I don't think the quality has really been that severely affected. I mean it has less impact than it did, inevitably it would, I mean no electric guitarist is going to have the impact of Jimi Hendrix because it's so long since he showed people what could be done and that sort of goes across the board with all aspects of pop music. But that doesn't mean to say the quality is worse.

No, it's just harder for people to do new things?

Harder for them to do new things and harder for them to be perceived as new things in many cases.

I wonder if that applies to the writing as well, if that same principle applies to writing about music as well?

I suppose it is harder to find an individual voice than it would have been. I don't know. (1h44m25)

Interview with David Sinclair
The Defectors Weld, Shepherds Bush, London. 27th March 2006

Part A

As you were one of the first rock and pop writers for the Times, can I ask where you got your style from? Did you actively try to create something new or did you try to emulate something that was already out there?

Style is a difficult question really. I must admit I've never really thought about it too much. The important thing it seemed to me, when I was starting out, was to fit in, in some sense, to the general tone of the newspaper or the arts coverage of the newspaper. *The Times*, certainly in the 80s, was a much more staid and conservative kind of operation, and the arts coverage especially so. Arts coverage was very much weighted in favour of opera, theatre, dance, classical music, and so to find a voice for popular music or rock music in amongst that crowd was a bit of a balancing act basically. I obviously had certain role models or certain people that I regarded as being obviously very good writers who I would have liked to try and be like.

Music writers?

By and large yes. Richard Williams was a good example. He was actually one of the deputy Editors of *The Times*, and he was the jazz critic at *The Times* as well, he was my boss to begin with. An absolutely brilliant writer and quite highbrow I suppose. He's now the sports writer for *The Guardian*. But I think the important thing really was just to read the paper a bit, it's like writing for anyone. At the time I got to write for *The Times* I was actually writing for *Kerrang!*, that was my main writing gig, and you'd think that was quite a stylistic leap to make, but actually you just have to immerse yourself in what is being written in that particular paper, be it *The Times* or be it *Kerrang!*

So you adapted to the house style?

A little bit, or quite a lot actually, yes I think quite a lot. But there weren't very many role models for writing about rock and pop in the broadsheet papers at that time. Certainly not at *The Times* and *The Telegraph*, they would tend to lag a little bit. There was a bit more in *The Guardian* at that time, although not an awful lot, and *The Independent* didn't exist, so it was quite limited in terms of role models that we had. (5m18)

I wanted to ask you actually, how was writing for the broadsheets different from writing for say *Q* or *Kerrang!*?

You had to fit into the very different mind sets. The thing about writing anything is to try and envisage what your readers might be interested to hear about or what aspects of it they might want to hear, and obviously they can be a very different breed. *Q* incidentally didn't exist either at that time, so really all you had was *NME*, *Kerrang!* and *Melody Maker* - that was still quite a force to be reckoned with. But there was a different set of demands for the broadsheets, they weren't interested in lots of hip slang or putting a 'K' instead of a 'C' everywhere, which was the *Kerrang!* house style of the time, you had to be a lot more sober, a lot more considered and you had to try and build a bridge basically between the world of pop and rock, which has its own very sort of tribal and idiomatic way of writing, and all the history involved with it. But build a bridge between that and something that the Arts Editor could understand. The Arts Editor at the time, his name was John Higgins, who has since died, was the person that actually invented arts pages in broadsheets, and he started it in *The Times*, in *The Financial Times* strangely enough, and then moved it to *The Times*. He was a big opera buff and had an interest in classical music and everything, and he just started, back in the 60s I think, late 60s, he started to introduce the idea of just doing an opera review every so often, or a theatre review in *The Times*, and that's where the arts pages began, they didn't happen before that. So my mission, if you like, or what I had to do, was to make the idea of a pop concert or an interview with a pop star into something that John Higgins could at least tolerate, or if not actually relate to, and that he felt confident would make sense to the readers in a broader sense. (7m57)

So did you find that you were having to adopt a style of writing that would be understood by perhaps a less specialist music readership than maybe *Kerrang!* or another specialist music publication so that you were, not really dumbing down, but making the style more widely accessible?

That's exactly what you had to do. You had to make it intelligible, and you had to write in a kind of way that was quite alien, at that time certainly, to rock writing conventions. You'd have people writing for the *NME* or *Melody Maker* at that time who would just assume a huge background

knowledge from their readership and could use a lot of slang, a lot of idiom, could be very irreverent and quite scathingly dismissive of certain things. Like the Genesis album, 'And Then There Were Three', in response to which the *NME* had a review which I think said 'Three Too Many' and that was it. Obviously you couldn't do any of that, you had to adopt a more responsible tone in a way, you had to try and put in a bit of background, whatever it was you were writing about, you couldn't really assume, well unless it was Madonna or the Rolling Stones, so unless it was someone very, very big you'd have to really explain precisely who they were and give some kind of explanation as to why you were reviewing them, which is still a good value to hang on to. You should always think to yourself 'well why am I reviewing these people?', just because it took my fancy was not quite enough. (9m52)

So how did you and or the Editor decide who would be covered?

I guess it's a combination of things, if it's a big enough act with a new album or a new tour then that would fit the first set of considerations, for live reviews anyway. And then how recently we'd done them before, how timely the whole thing was, how much space there was, what else was happening that week in the arts, which is still the case. You know, often I get people saying 'you must review this band because they've just got to number one' or 'they've just headed Reading festival' or something, and actually the reason you can't review them that week is because there's some new ballet, or there's some big opera or just some combination of other things, so you're working in a much bigger field than just popular music. But I suppose it's usually the more established acts that would have been considered. Although that did all change quite dramatically when *The Independent* started up in 1987. (11m20)

When I started at *The Times*, *The Independent* didn't exist, so really *The Guardian* did quite a lot of pop and rock and *The Telegraph* did virtually nothing, they had a guy called Charles Clover who was *The Telegraph's* pop correspondent by default. He was a sort of de facto, he was the only person I think in the arts department who showed the slightest interest, so he got the job. He's now the environment correspondent or something. He was never very interested in it, I always remember talking to him, and he didn't have a clue, he didn't know anything about it. But then what happened was *The Independent* came along in 1986 and the whole landscape changed, pretty much overnight to be honest, because they took pop and rock very seriously indeed. And it coincided with the expansion of pop and rock into the mainstream media in all sorts of different ways. *Q* magazine also started at the same time, in '86, and that was a new era as well, because that was a very different sort of magazine to *NME* which had become very niche, very exclusive and very uncaring of all the big pop stars, it was like an Indie ghetto really. *Q* changed all that. *Q* reconnected a generation of readers whose interests in pop and rock had lapsed, and that in turn triggered an interest amongst general readers of broadsheet newspapers. And *The Independent* was very good, one of the key things they did right from the very start, was take a big interest in rock and pop. They took it seriously and they devoted a Friday page to it, and previously no-one had done that. (13m30)

The Guardian's coverage of rock and pop was very piecemeal; some weeks it would be one review, some weeks it would be couple of things but bundled in together. We were terrible at *The Times*, we'd never stick to anything, you know. They'd say 'we might do a pop page next Tuesday, we might do one on Saturday, or we'll do the albums', albums was once a month on a Saturday I think, it was very piecemeal. And I always remember *The Independent*, opening it one week shortly after it started up, and they had a whole page advert for a Pogues album, whatever it was in '87 that the Pogues put out then, maybe *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*, I think it was. And that sent out a big message to the whole broadsheet industry that this was a serious business, there was serious money out there for the advertising people. The Pogues, which were not a big division or league one band, were prepared to pay for a whole page advert for an album, and everybody woke up. Suddenly *The Guardian* really locked horns with them and decided to do their full page, and so every Friday they would do something. (14m59) And finally, *The Times* also got more serious about it, it was still quite along time after that before we actually got a proper Friday section, but the main point is that they realised rock and pop needed to be taken a lot more seriously. And even though the Arts Editor didn't like it very much, he was pretty unsympathetic, he had to move on a bit and I'd certainly credit *The Independent*, and *Q* magazine, with changing a lot of things. (15m23)

Q magazine was very tuned into the same readers as the broadsheets in the 80s, and it was a big revolution when they started up. It just triggered that recognition that people who bought broadsheet newspapers were interested in reading about rock and pop again. They used a lot of the same writers, I wrote for *Q* at that time as well, and Andy Gill wrote for *The Independent* he was very much part of the *Q* team along with David Hepworth, there was quite a lot of overlap. (16m07)

So how hands-on or hands-off was the Arts Editor, or did it depend on the Editor? And to what extent did they tweak or change or modify your work?

They by and large didn't do very much to change it. Previews were a separate thing to reviews, which were a separate thing to interviews. You had previews which were part of the listings or Saturday Week Ahead section; reviews which were obviously going to a gig or a show and writing it up afterwards, a critique basically. Interviews which would incorporate previews usually, usually you'd be interviewing someone before their show came to town or before the record came out to flag it up because that's when people are available to be interviewed, they don't do it unless there's something to promote. And album reviews obviously, as and when the album comes out you review the album. So that's your four areas of activity.

So, you would never be commissioned to write one thing and then see it published as another?

No, no it was always pretty clear cut what the brief was beforehand, so you'd just tend to go in and do that. (18m05)

How much time did you have, say if you were commissioned to review an album or a live event before it was going to be published, did you have very long lead times?

It varies, the lead time. Obviously on broadsheet newspapers it's much shorter than the lead time on the weeklies and certainly much shorter than any monthly magazine, although, having said that they always set deadlines for monthly magazines so they don't just get everything coming in on one day right at the end which would be a nightmare, it's a rolling deadline for them. (18m51)

With live reviews it was usually, and still is really, a case of working a month ahead. So the last week of the month you usually do next months reviews. We all get a timetable of what we've got to do, this might be different elsewhere, but at *The Times* that's always pretty much how it's been done. You try to stick to that more or less, obviously things change as you go along. But with albums, it's just a once a week thing usually, although sometimes it can be pretty short notice and then it's never long enough to listen to. It tends to be a rolling process, so you tend to be listening to material now that you might review in two or three weeks time, but often you don't get the record until maybe the day you've got to review it which is pretty hopeless. You have to kind of extrapolate your feelings about it because with albums, I think, most people buy an album and they don't really get a fixed idea about it until maybe they've heard it two or three times or maybe five or six times over a period of couple of weeks, and yet you have to pretty much come up with a snap judgement on it maybe having only heard it once or twice. (20m15)

So it was harder writing for the broadsheets because you had to turn the work around quicker? Was it easier to write for perhaps a monthly because you have more time to think about it and were not being pressured to turn it out so quickly? (20m34)

It's a different unit of production to be honest. A live review is maybe four hundred or five hundred words, and sometimes, if it's going the next morning, you've got to write that the same night, and that's an absolute nightmare. You can be writing the review before the show is finished, you have to file it maybe by 11 o'clock or 11.30 and you can make some pretty crass mistakes to be honest, there's some pretty hideous examples of things going wrong, but usually a live review has to be written by the next morning. So if I see a show tonight, Jane Siberry at the Barbican, I'll have to file that by 10.30 tomorrow morning, so it is quite a quick turnaround. Sometimes interviews can be very quick, but usually you'd expect to have a week or ten days to turn it around. It's like having an essay deadline every day of your life basically because you have this succession of deadlines and you always start just a little bit later than you ought to do to get the work done in time. (22m20)

But also, talking about your particular time period, it was a period of incredible upheaval. When I started at *The Times* you had to physically take a hard copy of your review to the building in Grays Inn Road by 9 o'clock the following morning. The first show I saw was Meatloaf at the Hammersmith Odeon, as it was then called, and I had to write it up after the show and have it there in *The Times* office in Grays Inn Road by 9 o'clock the following morning. It was then set into hot metal by the printing guys who were highly unionised, highly disruptive and a bolshy bunch of people who didn't make your life any easier at all. They set it in hot metal and if there was a problem, if it was too long for example, sometimes, and *The Times* was better than most, sometimes they would just chop it off at the knees. Wherever they ran out of space that was it, and so the review might just get near the end then it would just stop.

So you'd make the last two or three paragraphs perhaps sound like they could maybe be your last just in case! You'd always make sure you got your key points in at the beginning, yes. So in terms of the turnaround, obviously things became dramatically easier once computer technology came in around the end of the 80s. I got my first computer around 89 or 90 or something like that, and I didn't have email but I could hook up into the mainframe of *The Times* ATEX computer, and you could send stuff in. You had to have a separate modem and it was all a big hoo har, but by the standards of the day it was fantastic. Suddenly you didn't have to take a hard copy in, you could just flip it through and that eradicated so many mistakes and it make it so much easier, because before that, this guy would literally have to key in what you'd written, copying it off the type written page, which probably had a few mistakes in it anyway, and the scope for things to go wrong was limitless. So just in a technical sense, the quality of the finished product improved absolutely dramatically at that point. And in answer to your earlier question, you had a lot more time suddenly because obviously it's quicker to write on a keyboard and on a computer than on a typewriter, and there was no longer a need to physically take it over there. (25m44)

So I think the general answer is that in broadsheet newspapers, and indeed daily newspapers generally, it's a much shorter turnaround. But you're also writing shorter pieces. If you're writing for a big magazine it's going to be two or three thousand words maybe, but in the broadsheets there's less space to go rambling on, certainly in that period. I mean now you've got Saturday magazines and you've got supplements and you've got far more scope for longer pieces, but back then it was like 500 words, hard copy, in the office 9 o'clock the following morning, and that's your lot. And I still really think along those lines myself in a funny way, you know (like self discipline?) A little bit. And also it suits some people better than others, some people want to be mulling it over for ages writing a big piece, but I was always much happier just banging out a quick review (like a gut response?) Yes, well not spend too long on it anyway. (26m48)

Thinking now about volumes of coverage. In terms of different genres, I'm interested in whether rock and pop journalists were always jostling for space and position with maybe the classical or jazz writers. Were you battling it out to get the most words or the best position on the page? Was there a hierarchy if you like?

I think, there probably is a bit of a hierarchy and certainly there was at that time, in the 80s, yes. In the period 81 – 91 it was very much the case that rock and pop was the poor relation, very much so. Nowadays it's changed slightly, you're much more likely to find someone who has come up through pop or one of the roots genres, or maybe TV or something like that, in charge of the arts. But back then it was always going to be the classical person, the dance person or the theatre person, who would be in charge of the arts, the Arts Editor would be more likely to come from that background. And yes, pop and rock was held, very much I think, in somewhat lesser regard than the other arts at that time. (28m51)

Did that change though as time went on?

Yes it did. It changed, well as I said when *The Independent* came along, that really was the first time it got any attention at all and the first time that rock and pop was taken even remotely seriously. But I suppose it changed more, later on in the 90s (so after this period, after 91?) Yes I would say so, it was more when Oasis and Blur and Britpop came along and all those kind of much more high-profile tabloid type stories, the Spice Girls as well obviously. That was when the levy broke if you like and suddenly everyone took pop and rock much more seriously. The Editor of *The Times* at that point was a big Madonna fan and a big Radiohead fan and so in the 81-91 period rock was a very poor relation. I mean I think even jazz was more highly regarded, certainly at *The Times*. I think *The Independent* always took rock and pop more seriously, because it was aiming at a much younger readership, and it was a new paper. *The Independent* led the way really, in terms of bringing it in from the cold if you like, in terms of giving it more status, more attention, more prestige. It's silly in way though because, and that's what they eventually realised, they would give all this space to some play or some opera or some latest production of Swan Lake which had captured the imagination of all the highbrow critics and people in the newspapers, and yet one show by Meatloaf or someone would have about ten times the amount of people going to it. I mean in terms of the audience figures, it always amazes me that they always gave film such prominence, and took it so seriously, and yet if you compare the number of people who go to concerts compared to the number of people who go to a film, the numbers are hugely in favour of pop. But it's always been, in terms of artistic value or something, it's traditionally held to be of somewhat lesser value. (31m50)

So as rock and pop rose up the hierarchy, do you think other genres were elbowed out of the way to make more room for more rock and pop, do you think anybody suffered as a result of rock and pop doing a bit better?

I don't think anyone else suffered especially. I think what happened, again around the time *The Independent* came on board, was that all the technology changed and it made it much easier to produce newspapers and magazines. So what happened was the coverage of everything expanded dramatically, so it coincided with a technological revolution if you like that just meant everything expanded, and it has done ever since. It's been astonishing really when you think about it. If you did a comparable database from 91 – 2001 it would be about three times bigger maybe by the end of the period. (33m)

You've got the supplements too. I mean the *Saturday Times* now is as big as the *Sunday Times* was back then. The old *Saturday Times* was a sliver of a thing, you'd get hardly anything in it at all. So I don't think anything suffered unduly, I'm not aware of it anyway. I think the coverage of everything increased so dramatically that there was pretty much plenty for everyone. I think the old school types, the classical types, do get a bit fed up sometimes with seeing endless pieces of, you know, big pieces about rap stars and rock stars, but I think they accept it as the reality now. But certainly the Friday page now, it's the complete reverse of how it ever used to be, it's all dominated by pop and rock and you maybe get one little piece about a classical person that's shoved in there. So I don't know, you'd have to ask those guys if they felt bad about it. (34m12)

I noticed as well that the roots genre started to emerge as new category at that time, how did the Editors decide who would cover newly emerging genres or subgenres or did you just volunteer? (34m33)

Yes, it tended to be just whoever was up for it really, which is how the whole job is sorted out as far as I can see. It's a very ad hoc deal, being a critic or writing about any of these subjects. It's really just an extension of an enthusiasm that you've got and hopefully an ability to write, and there's never really any sort of particular qualification for doing the job other than a willingness to do it and a little bit of luck in being in the right place at the right moment.

So you could say to an Editor, that you'd spotted something new and that you'd be happy to pick it up and run with it, and they gave you that freedom, they trusted your judgement?

By and large yes, they have to. I mean they did and they do, and as long as you've got their ear and you're writing for them I think they have to accept your judgement to some extent. Editors have become a lot more hands on recently, but again in the period 81 to 91 Editors didn't have a clue, they didn't know anything about rock and pop at all. It was completely foreign territory, and they didn't really want to know particularly, it wasn't something they had a lot of interest in. So they trusted you pretty much totally at that time. I could more or less tell them what I was going to do pretty much start to finish. Now the Arts Editor is much younger than I am and has been brought up during the 80s and was a big Duran Duran fan and has a whole range of views and interests and ideas about the subject which, as far as she's concerned, outflank mine. She knows more than I do as far as she's concerned, and she probably does in terms of what she wants the arts page now to reflect. I think now everyone who's interested generally in the arts will know something about popular music, but back then they didn't. They really didn't, it was two different worlds. If you want the biggest change of all I think that was probably it. I mean, the Editor classes in the 80s were pretty clueless about the subject and indeed in the 90s some of them probably, at *The Times* anyway. At *The Times* we had a great Arts Editor called Richard Morrison, who still writes for *The Times*, he's a brilliant writer, and he's great, knows everything about classical music but he knew absolutely nothing about pop and rock. And he was quite happy to ask me 'what do you think about this old boy?', and he'd say to me 'yes, yes well just keep it light', and that was great. But he's gone now and it's changed now. (37m44)

Did you notice any change in the type of articles being published, so towards the beginning of that decade were you perhaps writing more reviews but by the beginning of the 90s were you writing more previews or music obituaries for example? (38m08)

Well, there's far more obituaries to be written these days sadly, as the whole genre moves in to a rather decrepit, middle age/ old age sort of area, so there's far more of them going on. But when I started, I did about two live reviews a week and that was about it really. I mean, you might find more than that when you go to your database, I don't know. But two live reviews and maybe an interview a month and record reviews once a month and that was it, there wasn't much else. I don't know if anybody else was really writing anything at *The Times*, this was 1985. But then, by the end of the

80s, by 1989/90, you had record reviews every week and quite a big chunk of them, maybe four or five. Well I couldn't, even by then, write all of it. I mean I would write maybe a couple of reviews a week but other people would be doing reviews and interviews as well. (39m30)

But again, another change that *The Independent* ushered in was the listings, the idea that you listed and previewed. They were very big on listings so suddenly we had to be very big on listings, and I remember that every Monday, we had to do this, we had virtually a whole page of listings. It's now done for us by, in the Knowledge, you know the Saturday supplement magazine, it's all farmed out to some outside company and they supply it all. But back then I had to do it all, and I just had to sit there laboriously going through all the *NME*'s, no internet, no Google no tour dates to Google, you had to just go laboriously through the *NME* or *Time Out* obviously for London, or *Melody Maker*. It was always *Melody Maker* I used because it had all the small ads. So I'd go through *Melody Maker* to find out where all the tours were, and you had to list every bloody single bloody thing. So Monday, you'd be starting with Monday the following week, so you'd have to list maybe five shows that day all around the country, add a little tag line of what it was and the price and the phone number. I mean it was the most unbelievably laborious job. Nowadays no-one in house would do that, they would farm that out. (41m20)

So listings became a big thing and have remained as such ever since. But it was all very ad hoc at that point. Everything's always done in a panic, they like to give the impression it's through careful planning and research and focus groups and everything, but it's just basically 'O Christ *The Independent*'s got listings, we'd better get some listings, call Sinclair and get him to do something'. And it's the same for the others, Geoff Brown for film and Richard for classical music. It's always the funniest thing as well, when *The Guardian* comes up with something you just know that two months later we're going to do the same, i.e. G2 arrives so voila 'I think we're going to start a new supplement T2', there's an awful lot of mimicry and looking over your shoulder that goes on. (42m22)

I notice that increasingly there would be a photograph accompanying reviews, did that affect the space that was available to you or affect your writing?

To be honest, you never really know when you're writing if there's going to be a picture, so quite often it's a surprise. I think it tends to be dependent on how the whole page is laid out, they kind of take a position on it quite late on. *The Times* did go through a very odd period actually, now you've reminded me, when Charlie Wilson took over the Editorship, and I think this was possibly a little bit after your timescale, maybe in the early 90s. There was a couple of years, maybe 91-92, when it went almost tabloid, it had huge headlines and very short bits of text and it went down that route almost to the point where it was about to self-destruct. It was almost as if he had a mission to turn it into a tabloid. You used to have huge headlines, and I just remember that time as being a very unhappy period when there was hardly any space, when the reviews went from about 500 words to about 200 words, and that was a pretty grim time. But I'm not sure if that's within your particular time frame. (44m19)

And then Simon Jenkins became the Editor after that, and suddenly we went back to much more solid position, there was a much more healthy balance in terms of content and eye catching features such as headlines, pictures and all the rest of it. I think generally you're hoping you *do* get a picture. If you get a picture with your piece I don't think it means your piece is going to be smaller or shorter I think it just means it's going to be read more, and it means more prominence. And actually, if you do lose a few words it's probably OK because you're more pleased it's got a picture because that's a sign of approval from the Editorial people and it's a sign that the piece has fought its way through to a more prominent place. So any use of pictures is generally welcome. (45m19)

What is *not* welcome is those huge headlines. You asked me before whether they alter what you've said or change the function of a piece, which they don't do normally, but what they often do is put a provocative headline or a very controversial strap-line, you know the line underneath it, like for example 'Mick Hucknall – I was a babe magnet and I didn't care less' or something like that. So you'd do an interview with someone like Mick Hucknall and they'll lift out the one thing he said which was slightly embarrassing or awkward and they'll parlay that into the headline and stick it up in bold. I'm sure you've heard artists complain about it a lot, well writers don't like it very much either, and often it'll be something completely, just ludicrously unrepresentative of what's been said in the piece, but it's to get people to read it. The sub's job is to get people to read the piece and sometimes they just do that in a really, I think, irresponsible way. It happens all the time, and the people you are

writing about always assume, and indeed most of the people who read it I expect, always assume that you, the writer, are the person who has written the headline and all the bits around it, the strap-line or the picture caption, or whatever it is that's upset them, because yours is the only name that's up there and it's a real bug bear. It's a thing that constantly upsets and niggles, writers don't like it, and I don't like it very much, but you get immune. My friend Robert Sandall, who writes for *The Sunday Times*, he used to not ever get the Sunday papers because, although he was in it every week, it just ruined his day to see how they'd presented his piece. They were the worst for it, they would really take it upon themselves to present a piece in a way that was sure to annoy the subject of it and the person who'd written it, and so he always used to leave it until Monday, by which time he could look at it in a much calmer light. (48m09)

I don't know if you've read it, but in his book 'In Their Own Write', Paul Gorman suggests that there was a golden age of rock music criticism which ended in the mid 1980s, and I just wondered if you agreed?

Well I think it's a rubbish idea that rock criticism ended around that time actually. With due respect to Paul Gorman. I thought the golden age of rock journalism was really in the 70s, and there were two golden ages really; there was one around the time of the early 70s when two of my favourite writers came up, Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent. Charles Shaar Murray is still around, he still writes for *The Telegraph* from time to time and he writes for *The Observer* and has written quite a few books and is quite an award winning journalist, and Nick Kent. Those two guys started writing for the *NME*, there was a whole bunch of other ones around them who totally brought rock journalism into the modern era. In the 60s it was just sort of fanzine press release stuff, there was hardly any decent writing at all in that time, there was very little of it anyway. And then there was the era in the late 70s with Julie Burchill, Tony Parsons and that mob, but they weren't really the best of the writers to be honest, they're always the two names that come up because they've done so well subsequently, but there were much better ones than them around. (50m38m)

But it was the era of punk and it was just a very lively and exciting time. Actually I still remember Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent being great writers around that time, I thought they were brilliant writers. Then I think around the 80s, the early 80s, rock got kind of very insular. Rock criticism and rock writing got very self-referential, all they wanted to write about was Ned's Atomic Dustbin, and My Bloody Valentine, people who'd sort of sold, I don't know, 300 records and maybe played the Forum or something. But in terms of finding out what Rod Stewart was up to, or Paul McCartney or the Rolling Stones or anybody who was even remotely successful, they didn't want to know. It's as if it turned inwards on itself and I think it was about the mid 80s, 86 when *Q* came along and 87 when *The Independent* started up, that was when they actually broke out of that rather, well it depends how you look at it really, it depends how you regard the function of it, but I think it was very inaccessible in that period. So Paul Gorman might think it was a golden era but I thought the golden era was before that. I think the *NME* in particular had become pretty unreadable about that time, it was just guys talking about what they'd done and what they thought about everything, and there were huge credits for the writer. You wouldn't even know what they were writing about sometimes. There were no concessions to anyone, certainly not the reader, and it was all 'the world according to me'. The one thing *Q* did that was revolutionary, was they actually made the writers by-line very small, and people thought, 'wow, who wrote this?', and it was considered very odd because the person they were writing about was suddenly the focus, it seems curious to even say it now, but back then in the *NME* days it was the writer that was considered more important than the person they were writing about. That's why nobody bought it, I think, its circulation was in freefall. (53m12)

Thinking of advertising – did you notice any changes in music advertising in the broadsheets and if so how did that affect your writing. For example, were you just commissioned to write articles that could be tied into some piece of marketing?

I don't think there was much advertising in the broadsheets in the 80s to be honest. There wasn't much arts advertising in that period I don't think. The *Sunday Times* used to have a big sort of catch-all area where a few concerts would get advertised but generally it was pretty thin on the ground. As I said before, until *The Independent* came along and that advert for the Pogues album which sticks in my mind, I'd never seen anything like it. A whole page advert for an album, it was unheard of. And from that point on people did start advertising, I mean that's what drove them to start taking it seriously obviously, because there was the money and the will to advertise. But it took a very long time to catch on, particularly at *The Times*, because the people who were in charge of the budgets, and the people in the music industry, the acts, they all read *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, they wouldn't read *The Times* or *The Telegraph*, and that's changed. (55m14)

So you wouldn't submit a piece of writing and then see that it had been pushed out of the way by an advert?

Oh, that happens all of the time, but not by an advert for a rock band or a music advert necessarily, often just by a general advert. The papers are totally driven by advertising. Even now you're always subject to an advert being dumped on the page at the last minute and that'll knock out just about anything.

Was the situation worse or better back in the 80s?

I'm not aware of any big difference. Certainly there were no adverts for pop music in the 80s. But the danger of your copy being obliterated by the sudden arrival of an advert has always been there. It's ever present. Newspapers and magazines are always driven by the advertising and if you write for a magazine and it's a quiet month for advertising they just drop their pagination, I mean it just drops by twenty pages sometimes. Newspapers are the same, well less so, but if a sudden influx of adverts come along you can find the paper suddenly gets bigger because there's enough adverts to make a bigger paper that day. So it swings in roundabouts, in which case obviously that's better because you've got more space for your writing, but if it's staying the same size and you get more adverts, or there's not quite enough adverts to make it a bigger paper then obviously they're going to dump some of your writing. It's quite hard for them to predict, but I don't know an awful lot about what goes on, on that side of it to be honest. (57m18)

I'm interested in the Wapping Dispute and how it might have affected your writing and your career in general. You've already mentioned that the way you submitted your work changed but were there any other consequences?

Wapping was hugely important, I mean *The Independent* wouldn't have started up without the Wapping Dispute, nor would *Q* I don't suppose. That was the battle between News International and the print unions for the right to use the new technology basically, and it was obviously going to happen at some point but the print unions were very adamant that they weren't going to let this go through. They operated a very restricted closed shop for a very long period of time, you might know about their Spanish practices as they were called, a phrase used to refer to the incredibly underhand ways in which they would disrupt production to get their own way. They literally held the Editors and Editorial staff over a barrel. If there was something they didn't want to happen they would just stop the presses and refuse to finish the paper that day. Some days it didn't come out. *The Times* was actually shut for about a year in the early 80s, before I started writing for them, and that was the situation they had. But it was Murdoch and News International that took on the print unions and recognised that we couldn't carry on like this, we'd got all this incredible new technology which could revolutionise the way papers are made and which is obviously going to make redundant all these printers. The hot metal printers were fabulously well paid, they used to arrive in big cars and were the last aristocracy of the union movement in the late 80s, and very powerful. So they weren't going to give up without a fight, and it was very, very ugly. Fortress Wapping, as it's still known, was the means by which Murdoch and News International pushed through the changes. They knew they were never going to get any agreement from the unions, so it was like a military operation really, so he just set up this new plant and started doing it the way we wanted to do it and just ignored the unions. He obviously knew this was going to provoke a very extreme response, which indeed it did. I remember I was in Texas actually when it happened. I was researching a book I wrote on ZZ Top and I phoned my wife and she said 'Oh they've just announced that they're closing where we are in Grays Inn Road', and they're going to some place in Wapping and it's all happening at the weekend', and they did it all in a clandestine operation. The whole thing was set up. And so they went to Wapping and the Unions went mad. It was really, really ugly. A lot of people who now work for them, write for them, were part of the picket lines, a very unruly mob. Even to get in there you had to be driven in by bus, you had to go to a different place every day because if you had a fixed meeting point to get the bus they would've come and harassed you there I guess.

So were you having to operate from different places?

Well the thing is, because of the new technology I could then start sending stuff in, I didn't have to take it in, but to be honest I can't remember the exact chronology of events.

It sounds like it made your life easier in many ways?

It made everyone's life much easier actually, once the initial pain was over. I mean it made *The Independent's* life possible. People forget that *The Independent* couldn't possibly have started up under the old regime, there was no way, it was uneconomic, backward and it was highly expensive and hopelessly inefficient. But no other newspaper group had the bottle to take on the unions so it

was a pretty bold and a pretty unpopular move. There's still a lot of ill feeling about it even today if you talk to people who were around. (1h02m45)

So in terms of how it affected your music writing, was it mainly to do with the process by which you could submit your work?

Yes the new technology made it far easier, far better, I could send my copy straight into the mainframe of the newspaper's computer and so therefore it was more likely to be accurate, assuming I was accurate, and I didn't have to physically take it anywhere, just send it down a phone line. And so although the office became much more remote, and I hardly ever went into Wapping and still don't, it actually became much easier to physically get material there.

(Break, digital recorder re-set to 0:00:00)

I was wondering if Thatcherism affected your writing directly? So for example I think there was less emphasis on the arts and more emphasis on commerce and business – did it affect your writing in anyway?

I don't know if it affected my writing. It was a subject I tried to avoid as much as possible. The media and the arts community in general were very opposed to everything she stood for and everything she was and did. I don't know, I suppose you could understand that and a lot of my friends and people I knew, and still do know, regard her as the incarnation of evil and the devil and all these things. I'm not so sure you know. When you look back on it and what she did, and certainly in terms of the newspaper industry, she obviously created a climate within which News International was able to prosper and feel confident and strong enough to take on the unions at that point. I think that the revolution in the print and newspaper industry was all part and parcel of the Thatcherite revolution. It's not something that people are very keen to recognise or give her credit for, but to my mind, the industry benefited from her influence. It's almost like heresy to say it, even as I say it it feels heretical, but I think you have to come to accept that some of those things were pretty necessary. The print unions were a nightmare whatever way you look at it. Even if you were in the union, if you were someone who was trying to get a job in a newspaper, the biggest obstacle to getting in was that lot, you know, it was an obstacle to the industry expanding, it was an obstacle to newspapers becoming bigger and more extensive in their coverage, it was an obstacle in every way you looked at it. So I was glad they went out myself, I shed no tears for them at all. So you saw it as a positive change? Yes (3m06)

I also wanted to ask if you see yourself in a particular tradition of journalism, but I think earlier on you said that there were certain writers who you respected...

I don't know if I was you know, or think that I ever have been. I often thought that it's a curious position to occupy being someone who writes about pop and rock for a broadsheet newspaper, certainly in that period, in the 1980s it was a very odd position. There weren't many of us around, certainly not many have survived to this point. Andy Gill is about the only one, Robin Denselow is still around and I don't know who else, Richard Williams writes about sport. People are around but they don't really write about music. In terms of role models, it's difficult, and I don't think there was a tradition you know. It's an odd thing to do. There's this story about Richard Williams who once filed a piece about the Sex Pistols for *The Times*, obviously that's before your time, in the 70s, and he filed a piece in which he made reference to the fact that the record was called 'Anarchy in the UK' and the sub Editor saw this and looked in the style book and saw that *The Times* style was to say United Kingdom so he changed it to Sex Pistols record 'Anarchy in the United Kingdom', and that's what you were up against, it's as uncomprehending as that. So it was a difficult subject for the broadsheets of that era to address. It didn't really understand the lexicon of pop music. (4m44)

Were you getting elements of your style from abroad, perhaps from rock music journalism in America and people like Lester Bangs?

Lester Bangs, yeah those guys were great. *Rolling Stone* was a big influence I suppose. The stuff I read about when I was coming up, as it were, would be *NME* and possibly *Rolling Stone* in America, who I also wrote for, for quite a long time in the 90s. I don't know, I think it was just a job I was able to do for some reason, I read *The Times* and I read the broadsheet papers and wrote for *Kerrang!* So I suppose I was an odd person. I got the job because of an absence of other people with even a remotely similar profile. I mean it's all different now, lots of people now aspire to write for the broadsheets, but I don't think back then anyone even thought about it.

So back then, was it considered a better or worse position to be in as a music writer for the broadsheets as opposed to the specialist music press. Was one considered better than the other? (6m07)

I think they were slightly separate worlds, and I think that the music papers didn't take the broadsheet journalists very seriously at all. They looked on us as, which we were, as a bunch of amateurs. We were regarded as pretty useless by the music press and I have to say that the *NME* and the music press did set the agenda to a large extent, as far as I'm concerned, in a way that now you'd think it was probably the other way around. Now, if Alex Petridis talked about the Arctic Monkeys in *The Guardian* then that's a big thing. I mean you may or may not have heard about them through the *NME* or some other specialist channel, but he's just as likely to have picked up on them at about the same time as the *NME* guy, if not earlier. Back then though we were very much following in their wake. But we were more open minded, in 1985 the *NME* wouldn't even entertain the idea of reviewing Paul McCartney's record, or Elton John's show, and they'd just about maybe give a little bit of space to the Rolling Stones, but only to mock them. It was very, very inbred and inward looking and hipper than thou, and so we had a more open minded stance, we'd cover all of those things really, we'd do something on Cyndi Lauper and we'd also do the House of Love or somebody who was pretty obscure, you know. But we did take our cue quite a lot from them, they were the ones in the forefront and we were slightly more 'following up'. (8m56)

And that was up to and including 1990s?

Yes. It has changed a lot. I would say when grunge came along, Nirvana were written about far more in the music press than in any of the broadsheets. It was a big moment actually when Kurt Cobain died, the broadsheets didn't have a clue, it was really embarrassing. I thought it was terrible, and it was often remarked on, because that was just before Britpop and Oasis came along and everything did change quite a lot, but most of the Editors, Night Editors and Obituaries Editors didn't have a clue who Kurt Cobain was and couldn't care less, they thought he was just another pop star. We knew that it was a huge story and that it was massively significant, kids were really upset about it. It was a serious big story. So, what I'm saying is, I think is that in the 80s it was very much the case that readers weren't really so well informed and the Editors and people running the show certainly weren't, so we couldn't really compete with the *NME* or *Q* or whoever it was. (10m26)

Speaking of readers, I'm interested in how you perceived your relationship as a broadsheet writer with your readers, and also the music industry and the artists. Did you see yourself as maybe a 'learned friend', or 'consumer guide' or 'detached expert' passing on your knowledge? How did you see yourself and whose side were you on?

Well those are all good questions. I don't know really. Well, there's a hierarchy of people you've got to appeal to or make sense to or be accountable to, and the first person is your Editor of the arts section. If your Editor doesn't think what you've written is any good then it's not going to go any further, so that's your first priority. Then beyond your Editor it's your reader, and those two are pretty much intertwined. So you've got to entertain and inform and make sense of it all to that one person and that group of people. After that I guess you're trying to inform as much as anything, you're trying to give a sense of what happened, of what the record is like or what a show was like, like telling a story I always think. And your critique of it, you take on it, your feeling about it, is a secondary consideration, although it's important. As for the artists, the music industry and the PR's, you have to slightly distance yourself. I mean you're aware of things and you certainly know if you've pissed someone off. But you know, by next week they'll be back with a different act and there'll be another day and they're not going to get upset over a long period, so you have to distance yourself from all of that. But if your Editor is upset, if he or she thinks you've done a bad job, either what you've said or if you're barking up the wrong tree, like the film critic Geoff Brown he just wrote off just one too many of the big blockbuster movies that the Editor's wife and kids had enjoyed, and that was it. I mean this was the Editor, Editor, that was Simon Jenkins, and one day he just snapped, but that's another thing you just have to live with. If you've just written off some big movie, *ET* or something, and the Editors happen to have liked it then, and he had read just a few too many of those from Geoff. It puts film critics in a difficult position because all the big films are always the worst films in the critics point of view. (14m19)

So you need a pretty good relationship with your Editors then?

Well, yes but then you can't always temper what you're saying. If you're going to be the right person for the job, ultimately your face might not fit after a while. It's unlikely it will for as long as it has in my case and you can't temper your point of view but you have to write something that the Editor thinks is worth putting out. If he thinks it's wrong or it's badly written or you're off the wrong track

too many times then you know it's probably best you're not writing for them really. And in terms of the people you are writing about, they're pretty robust generally. Sometimes it goes against you, sometimes people see your name down to interview them and they refuse to talk to you because of something you said about them before. Mark Knopfler did that to me the other day, I suppose he was reviewing his schedule in the morning and he saw my name down and said no, and that was because of a review I'd written about his show at the Albert Hall a year before. But it doesn't happen very often. I just try to make sense of it really and be a bit entertaining. (15m46)

... (Part B) ...

That's the end of my questions. So to summarise, I'm interested in how broadsheet music journalism changed during that period. You've given me an idea of the types of articles and styles of writing from that period, plus we've covered some of the external factors that were influencing you. Is there anything else that that you think is missing or that you think I should have covered...? (1h 00m 34)

I think, as I said before, the key element is the phenomenal expansion. I mean, I started in 85 and between 85 and 90 I would say the coverage doubled. I don't know what it was in 81 as I wasn't so keenly aware of it then. So the vast expansion, explosion if you like, if it's not too dramatic a word to use, that's the key thing. The change was aided, facilitated even, encouraged by the new technology, it was a period of big technological change, you can't underestimate that. Fortress Wapping and the defeat of the print unions you'd have to emphasise, which led directly to the emergence of *The Independent*, although, you'll find a lot of people don't like to draw attention to that fact. *The Independent* would not exist were it not for News International's stand against the print unions, and nor would all these papers with all their extra supplements. It would have happened eventually but it could have taken an awful lot longer. It was a really defining moment for the industry, and by extension for people writing about popular music in the broadsheets. It was a defining moment for anyone writing in the broadsheets, period. But because popular music was only finding its feet as a subject in that arena it sort of exaggerated the effect on that particular area of arts coverage.

The other thing I suppose we never touched on very much is the change of style. It's become far more relaxed, and the two have bled into each other in a way. So in the early 80s you could say there were two different worlds; you had the *NME* with its incredible hipster slang and in jokes and self-regarding egotistical writing, and you had the broadsheets with their straight-laced old fashioned Anarchy in the United Kingdom, slightly out of touch approach. By the end of the 80s I think you'll find the *NME* and *Melody Maker* really chummed up, thanks to *Q* I would say, because *Q* suggested that there were some readers out there you might want to entertain or interest, and that you might want to take account of what they're interested in and try and write in a way that has a more general broad appeal, not like your little indie ghetto crowd which is diminishing all the time, you know, their circulation really was dropping. In the broadsheets meanwhile, thanks to *The Independent* and the arrival of *Q*, the idea of writing about rock and pop suddenly became far more of a mainstream proposition and they accepted it, they had to learn. I remember one memo that came round once, when we got the name of the drummer wrong in U2, and this memo went round, this was the end of the 80s, saying 'this is simply not good enough, U2 are a really big band and we do not make mistakes like this', and this was the paper that a decade earlier had been insisting that the Sex Pistols record was Anarchy in the United Kingdom. So priorities had changed, and I think they woke up to the world of pop and rock and there was more of a level of convergence if you like. Rock and pop culture started to become a recognisable component of mainstream culture. If you think, at the start of the 80s, you didn't really hear that many pop records used as advertising sound tracks for example, that was quite a rare thing still. But by the end of the 80s you'd think nothing of hearing all sorts of pop music in mainstream commercials.

Pop culture bled into the mainstream and the broadsheets had to take account of that, and did take account of it. So it became much more a component of the broadsheet cultural mix than it had ever been before. It wasn't any sort of alien or something to be tolerated, it was something that had to be accommodated pretty sensibly, although there was still some way to go before the kind of general acceptance we have nowadays. You still had Bernard Levin, who was like a really crusty commentator, he was quite famous actually, famous for his incredibly long winded approach. He once wrote a very famous piece where the whole article was one sentence and it was like a thousand words, but it was all one sentence. And that was the sort of trick he'd pull. He would always wade in. And I remember when Kurt Cobain died, they gave a *huge* prominence, I mean, I wrote quite a good piece I thought, but it was completely dwarfed by Bernard Levin saying, 'who is this heroin addict,

just another ten pot pop star who thinks he's God and discovered he's not, and who cares' and it was all very dismissive and paternalistic and quite out of touch. Most people knew who he was. And so it still wasn't like it is now, but by the end of the 1980s things had certainly moved along in that direction. (1h07m44)

Interview with Tom Sutcliffe
At his home in Streatham. 26th August 2006,

Part A

So as you know then, I'm looking at how broadsheet music criticism may or may not have changed during the 1980s. I did a masters degree several years ago where I just looked at rock and pop music to see how it emerged in the broadsheet press, but with the PhD I thought I'd look at all music genres, and one of my questions is whether the emergence of rock and pop had an impact on other genres, and Simon Frith and Jon Savage wrote an article years ago talking about the effect of the Thatcher decade on music criticism, so that's the basis for my work. (1m58)

I want to just say in response to that, before you ask me any questions, that I was Deputy Arts Editor of *The Guardian* until 1985, around about the middle of the year, or maybe it was April I've forgotten exactly when I stopped. The Arts pages on *The Guardian* only came into existence around about 1969/ 1970/ 1971. But before that there was a page called Miscellany which carried reviews, the old traditional sort, there was no coverage of rock or pop or anything else. So if you think about it, when you say rock and pop what's actually happened is the coverage of rock and pop and world music have followed on the great, as it were, explosion of those forms in as far as their distinctive forms compared to popular music or music drawn from stage musicals. Most pop songs written in the 1920s and 1930s as you know had an early existence as part of some show or other, and indeed when Lloyd Webber came along he wrote songs in order to promote the idea of the show, so the song came first but it was designed for a show. Don't Cry for Me Argentina and so on, whether they were original as pieces of music or not, that's how he crafted them. So I mean, what I'm just going to say is that this period in terms of rock and other forms of non-classical music criticism, that was already only a very recent innovation in most national newspapers, to have any coverage at all, and what's in fact happened as we've got towards the year 2000 and into the present day is that the Editors don't really see any distinction between the different forms of music, so they feel they are doing a good job by covering music. They feel that classical music doesn't have as a large an audience, isn't as interesting to their readers, their young readers in particular, and that may or may not be true. So they feel they are still doing a perfectly good job even though the perception among classical music critics of the Critics Circle, of which I'm Chairman, is that in fact the situation is in fact a complete disaster. So that's why I referred to this in the emails to you comparing what happens in the *Zie Deutsche Zeitung*, or *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, or any of those German newspapers with what happens here. They do have rock and pop coverage now in those German (titles) but at the same time they have five or six broadsheet pages devoted to the coverage of culture and in that context the existence of rock and pop coverage is only a small, it's a proportion, and it's a reasonable proportion, it doesn't mean that you don't get opera reviews that are 1200 words long. Whereas in this country they all sort of go into the same kind of very narrow funnel and the reviews are all so short you can't say anything, and basically the coverage of culture in this country is a form of entertainment, and therefore the idea of that coverage is not to comment on what's happening or to enlighten people about aspects of it in its historical context, it's simply to provide people with a useful consumer guide. You're setting a quite interesting period, because it was very much I think with the benefit of hindsight, looking back, it was the turning point really in the middle of the 1980s, when I gave up being Deputy Arts Editor of *The Guardian*. The new Editor at that point who was appointed was in fact the former Deputy Sports Editor and he really knew nothing about culture at all, and he is now the Editor of *The Observer* newspaper. Is this Roger Alton? Yes. So you were Deputy Arts Editor until 1985? Yes.

So you wrote for *The Guardian*, when did you start exactly? (8m25)

I joined *The Guardian* on April 13th 1973. And I joined *The Guardian* from editing a music magazine called *Music and Musicians* which I'd edited since the December edition of 1970. I started writing for *The Guardian* in 1972 when I went to New York for the purposes of my magazine, but I had the opportunity to attend the gala with which Rudolph Bing left the Met. Rudolph Bing was a famous impresario who ran the Met for many years and before that had run the Edinburgh Festival. I think he was the founding Director of the Edinburgh Festival, and I went to that gala at which people like Jon Vickers sang and I wrote a review of it for *The Guardian*. It was the first time I dictated any copy to *The Guardian* over the transatlantic telephone, and it was quite an effort, and it was published and they liked it. So that enabled me to have a relationship with the Arts Editor of *The Guardian* whose name was Michael McNeigh, who retired two or three years ago from *The Guardian*. And his whole career after he left the *Oxford Mail* was at *The Guardian* I think. Mine of course was a different

background, I came from arts journalism and I had been a singer in the 1960s and I ran an early music group and I'd been a teacher in fact when I left Oxford first of all, for about five terms, teaching in a school for musical children. (10m03)

And so you were actually an employee of *The Guardian*?

I was on staff. I was not a freelance journalist. I had been self employed when I was editing the music magazine, but I'd just married Meredith and the whole point of going to *The Guardian* was that it was a staff position which had a degree of security attached. I had joined the National Union of Journalists I think in about 1970 or 1971, but of course it was of no relevance to my work on the magazine at all, but when I got to *The Guardian* it was necessary to be a member of the union anyway, and the fact that I was already a member of the union probably made it easier for me to be hired. What made it harder for me to be hired was the fact that I had no previous newspaper experience, which was certainly a disadvantage. But then it meant that I went into what's called the Features Department, which is where all the comment pages and the features, the women's pages and the arts page and various other things were edited. For the first six months that I was on *The Guardian* I did nothing but sub edit the arts pages. I went to work at 6.30 in the evening and worked until 12.30 at night. I used to make up the panel which was the sort of feature on each page and then I would do the editorial changes of the third edition of the newspaper which meant putting in for London edition the various London late reviews, the overnight reviews from the theatre and so on which were written by critics between when the show ended or when the concert ended. We had to get the copy upstairs around about 11 or 11.15 and it was then stoned in using hot metal, and I usually left about 12.30 but sometimes I had to stay until 1 or 1.30. So that came my way, I was called a Sub Editor in the Features Department and I remained technically a Sub Editor throughout the 23 years I was there. Although I became the de facto opera critic for quite a long period, and I wrote features. Sub Editors who joined the Features Department were given a day each week, when I joined it in 1973, which was called a writing day. We were encouraged to go off and write features, do various things and that was thought to be desirable and a lot of us who joined at that point did in fact become writers and get jobs, sometimes in other newspapers. Mike White for example the lop-eared correspondent, Political Editor of *The Guardian* or is he now Political Correspondent? I can't remember but anyway, he was a Sub Editor with me who had joined the Features Department perhaps a year or eighteen months earlier, but he had had a foundational experience in regional newspaper journalism which was the norm. I was an oddity in that I came from a specialist magazine where I had edited other music critics and had encouraged people to become music critics. Sometimes people who weren't primarily journalists and in fact many critics who subsequently made their names on newspapers had their start writing for my magazine *Music and Musicians* or sometimes, in the case of theatre critics, *Plays and Players*. I mean Micheal Coveney, who was *Daily Mail* critic for a time and before that who worked for *The Observer* and God knows what, he edited *Plays and Players* just as I edited *Music and Musicians* in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, until the middle of the Thatcherite period these specialist arts magazines existed and were a means for people to become journalists specialising in those areas, which no longer exists. So from that point of view it's much harder for journalists, but then on the other hand if you look at universities, journalism and media studies are incredibly popular now which they weren't in those days. (14m21)

A wealth of experience. So as a music critic for *The Guardian*, just briefly, how would you describe your style of writing or the style that you adopted?

Well I didn't adopt a style, I mean I had been a critic on *Music and Musicians*, editing myself. I developed as it were my own idea of how criticism should be handled. Obviously within the context of, because I was already a singer and a musician, I started singing at the age of eight as a chorister at Chichester Cathedral, I had a choral scholarship at my public school, I had a choral scholarship at Oxford and I studied singing between when I left Oxford at the age of 20 and for about three or four years with a teacher who was in fact employed at The Guildhall School and I worked as a professional singer. So obviously I came from a professional background into responding to these things. I was more interested frankly in the theatre as an experience and I wanted to be an actor, although I didn't in fact as it turned out become an actor, but I was always very interested in the theatre, and it was because I was interested in theatre that my take on opera once I became Editor of the music magazine, *Music and Musicians*, was much more geared towards the theatrical process of making opera work.

Opera is seen in this country as being a sort of part of music, whereas of course it is actually midway between music and theatre. It is a theatrical manifestation of a musical composition which is set in words and setting a play in fact, and that is not understood. I always saw myself as coming from a

much more theatrically alert background and writing about opera in a way that was different to the way that most music critics wrote about it, who didn't go to the theatre, weren't necessarily very interested in the theatre. Some of them are, some of them aren't. But I responded therefore to opera primarily, not just as a musical experience, but as a theatrical experience and I wanted to communicate that. And in fact that has been the way that opera has tended to be written about, whether that's correct or not, it's because in the twentieth century far fewer new operas are written. The whole issue that underpins this question is 'what is the extent to which the public is interested in or stimulated by new work?', and if you read the essay that I've contributed to *The Cambridge Companion to 20th Century Opera*, which is the last item in it, you'll see that I talk very fully about the change in the 20th century in the amount of novelty on which the public could be expected to count. In the 20th century, unlike in earlier operatic centuries, the public has become increasingly resistant to the new. The existing public has become increasingly resistant to new operas, and even to new plays. So that we live in an age which has a much stronger historical consciousness and which enjoys the works of the past, the way it enjoys the pictures of the past, the museums. So my position at *The Guardian* once I got really involved, the seed for my style was that I wanted to introduce the reader to the idea that what they were seeing made sense, and show them in what way it made sense, in terms of the meaning of the experience, in terms of the story and in terms of the quality of the work. There were so many different elements to relate to the question of how well somebody has sung, the question of how well it was conducted, that in the end there was an enormous amount to write about. So my problem was how much could I put into the limited space that was going to be provided, because even in those days reviews in *The Guardian* were unlikely to be very long, they were 400, 500, maybe 600 words mostly, I've rather forgotten how long they were, and they would be cut. Now I discovered that my style was, whether good or bad, my own style and I was confident about it and I used it. I didn't try to compromise because *The Guardian* was a newspaper written for intelligent people and so I didn't feel there was any need to write down to anybody. But at the same time in *The Guardian* there was not unlimited space so we got used to the idea that by writing at *The Guardian*, I often wrote longer than I should have done, which sounds very amateurish, but it meant that the Editor would take a decision as to whether what I was writing was interesting enough to justify the space that I was trying to fill. And we often, because when I was editing, I became aware of the fact that there was a lot of flexibility. They didn't commission strictly to length because in the days before computers it was much harder for people, they had to count every word, we had to 'cast off' we would call it a review, to see how much space it would take, and in order to design a page one had to actually form an impression of how long the articles were that you wanted to put on that page. So half the process of editing, quite apart from writing, was editing stuff down without destroying the character of the writing, making it fit within the context of this overall thing.

Nowadays with computers you can tell people how many words to write and you can in fact design the whole thing and it will all flop into place just perfectly like that. That's not necessarily a good thing, I think writing to length is also a skill that we all of course learn to do if we have to. At *The Evening Standard*, when I was there for nearly six years, I never did anything but write to length precisely, because I'd been so naughty at *The Guardian* for so many years, I thought well I've got to do this now I'm working for a middle market paper I'd better just make sure I play the game. As the 1970s went on, I became Deputy Arts Editor of *The Guardian* in 1977, I was encouraged really by the idea that good writing, interesting writing, often did appear at greater length than less interesting writing and therefore it encouraged one to try and, as it were, it was like who could shout loudest, who could write something that would justify its presence because of what it was. In the context of the daily newspaper this was slightly amateurish and slightly mad but it did mean that I was able to develop a lot more ideas and in the end I suppose I was able to do a job in relation to the recognition of new kinds of interpretation in the opera house which otherwise were being very badly received by many of the music critics who were writing in other media and other newspapers about them. So I came to be seen I think by colleagues as a maverick with odd opinions which the public didn't necessarily always share. For example I wasn't invited to join the Critics Circle, even though I'd been a critic from 1970 onwards editing *Music and Musicians*, until 1984. I was in fact invited to join at the same time as Hugh Canning who is now *The Sunday Times* critic and I think that reflected the fact that a lot of my older colleagues didn't really approve of what I was doing so there was a degree of censorship and disapproval expressed in that. When I was finally invited to join, I mean I've no idea how it happened, but Bryan Magee who is a rather pompous ex-MP from the Social Democratic Party, and a so-called expert on Wagner and philosophy, anyway he took the trouble to write and persuade me, it was felt that I needed to be persuaded because I'd been excluded for so long, and

Hugh Canning was asked at the same time and I'd been the person who'd been responsible for giving him all his opportunities on *The Guardian*, to make any mark at all as a critic or as a writer. (22m26)

Did you feel that there was a canonical style of opera writing that you had to adhere to?

No I didn't. The thing is the critics on *The Guardian* had always been individuals. Neville Cardus had his own way of writing and he had also been a cricket commentator if you remember, and very famous among cricketing enthusiasts for his way of writing about cricket, just as he was famous and much loved by some music lovers for the way he wrote about music. Some of his reviewing had been published in books, it had been collected and people treasured it. I personally don't much like what he does. But he did recognise for example the importance of Mahler, the composer, at an early stage which on the whole, when I was at school in the 1950s, Mahler was considered by our Director of Music to be not a very good composer, we were sort of told it wasn't really serious and we didn't need to worry about that, absolutely preposterous of course. But then you have to remember that this is against a background where in the 1950s, and this is very important, *The Times* refused to allow critics to review the music of Schoenberg, and Webern and Berg, the so-called Second Viennese School, because they were taken to be just nasty and modern and of no importance, they were writing rubbish and nonsense. So *The Times* critic Frank Howe simply, and in those days *Times* reviews were anonymous, they didn't review any of that stuff. They only started to review that kind of music when William Mann became the Chief Music Critic in the 1960s. So the idea of censorship in British arts coverage has a long history and it's self-censorship of course. That was the background against which one was working and in a sense people who are interested in culture in this country do develop a feeling that they're a voice crying in the wilderness and that there isn't really very much interest and that the people who edit these newspapers, who often think of themselves as being cultured, and in some cases like Alan Rusbridger can play the piano and 'like' music in inverted commas, they're not necessarily as cultured as they like to think. (24m47)

So you were able to be very individualistic?

I think I was able to be very individualistic. I think that may have been approved by some and disapproved by others. I think it was very nice that *The Guardian* was a paper that had room for somebody with a very particular point of view which on the whole stood by me. My problem on *The Guardian*, staying there for 23 years, was that for the first ten years, I was young and I was regarded by Arts Editors as being a relevant voice and somebody with something to say. So I was well supported until 1983. I think that from 1985 when Roger Alton became Arts Editor, initially I was well supported but then increasingly there were people who disapproved of me who got the ear of the more senior people.

At the very beginning of my career at *The Guardian* I had a very unfortunate experience. I wrote a feature about the agent Jasper Parrott who was part of Harrison Parrott. I wrote a feature saying that somebody who was running an agency shouldn't be able to become the General Director of a subsidised orchestra. It was a political point, because they were making money out of their agency and I thought that a lack of clarity about these roles was a bad thing because the orchestra, although not getting enough subsidy to pay its players properly, nevertheless was a subsidised institution. Well Jasper Parrott came back to that and accused me of being somebody involved in a music agency, which was ridiculous, I can explain that. And because Alistair Hetherington, the Editor of *The Guardian*, didn't know that and because there's a major alert about whether city journalists are tipping shares, in other words suggesting that people buy shares which then go up in price and then the journalist having bought the shares then sells them and makes money. There is an area of corruption in terms of abuse. This was what I was accused of within a few months of joining *The Guardian* and it was extremely embarrassing and Jasper Parrott who is a complete bastard, knew perfectly well that there was absolutely no foundation to this. It's true that I had a cousin whose father was very wealthy. My cousin Bob, who was a property developer in the south of England, and a remarkable entrepreneur actually and a tycoon in a sort of way, decided he would set up a small company to promote some concerts with this one man. I was not paid, I was never paid, there were only ever about two concerts put on. Jasper Parrott however was running an artists agency with about 50 or 60 people he represented, and he was involved in putting on concerts. I mean there was absolutely no comparison, but of course if you fling mud it sticks and I have a feeling that one of the reasons why my career at *The Guardian* was slightly difficult, for example Preston talked to me about making me Mike White's or Alan Smith's deputy on the diary and I had lots of contacts and it was something I could've done very well, but for some reason it never happened and I have an awful feeling that the reason it never happened was that in my first year this mud had been thrown at me and some of it had stuck, even

thought I was completely innocent. But this is the reality of professional life and if you stick your head above the parapet you're always going to come across some problems. (28m37)

Were you asked to fit your style of writing to suit a house style?

The Guardian never had a house style really. *The Guardian* believed that it was a paper which was entitled to publish personalities and one of the things that helped to sell the paper was the personality of the writers. There were writers on the women's page like Jill Tweedie. I mean the whole tradition really of *The Guardian*, Neville Cardus of course, Philip Hope-Wallace who when I joined *The Guardian* had given up a few years earlier as Theatre Critic and had become Dance and Opera Critic and he'd always been going to dance and opera and always loved them. He lived until 1979, he was a terrible drunk but nevertheless he survived somehow and managed to stay awake at some of these performances, God knows how, and write the next day, and he also wrote a column towards the end of his life. But anyway he finally died in his mid 60s, maybe he was 64, I can't remember, around about my age now, but anyway in 1979. That was what opened up the opportunity for me of writing much more regularly about opera because before that I had only really written about opera in places that Philip wouldn't go to, which means out of London because Philip was so old and so drunk that you couldn't really send him on a train anywhere. But he was a lovely man and I mean he was a great friend of various friends of mine, and he held court at El Vino's, the fabled hostelry which *Private Eye* used to write about a great deal in Fleet Street. But of course now that there are no newspapers in Fleet Street and now drinking is out of fashion in journalism, I mean they take coke instead I think, but anyway there isn't any of that going on. (30m33)

So who was your Arts Editor?

Well my Arts Editor when I started was Michael McNay, and he was editing the arts pages for Peter Preston, Preston had been Features Editor before becoming Editor of *The Guardian*, and after that he became Night News Editor. And my first interest in joining *The Guardian* was as a News Sub and he said to me 'no, you don't want to be a News Sub you want to be a Features Sub'. And by the time I got to be taken on by *The Guardian* someone called Harry Jackson, who was a very experienced journalist who had been a tea boy originally on *The Guardian*, who worked his way up in fact. I mean Francis Wheen the famous journalist of today was a tea boy on *The Guardian* for a time, a messenger when he was young, although he came from a much more upper class background than Harry Jackson. Harry was a very nice man but he was very doubtful about giving me a job on *The Guardian* in 1973 because he really didn't believe that you could become a proper journalist if you hadn't been through the mill, and perhaps he was right, maybe I never became a proper journalist. So Michael McNay when I started and then he was replaced by Stuart Brooke-Wavell, and then he was replaced by somebody called Tim Radford who joined *The Guardian* when I did and was a New Zealander who'd worked for the Central Office of Information. He ended up as Science Correspondent for *The Guardian*. Stuart Brooke-Wavell ended up working for *The Sunday Times*. When I became Arts Editor I was Deputy to I think Stuart for a short time, then to Tim Radford and then to Patrick Ensor. Patrick Ensor was a bright and very nice man, he's now the Editor of the weekly *Guardian*, and he for a time went out to work on *The Dominion* in Wellington, New Zealand. Patrick gave up being Arts Editor when Roger Alton became Arts Editor in 1985, and that's when I stopped being Deputy Arts Editor. So Roger Alton then followed on and in the remainder of the 1980s he was succeeded I think first of all by Helen Oldfield and then by a brilliant young whiz kid who has since disappeared without trace, I think he went to work for *The Daily Mail* in some role, I can't even remember his name I'm afraid, that's partly psychological. But he was a whiz kid that somebody like Alan Rusbridger spotted. Alan Rusbridger has always loved the idea of giving chances to people who he thinks are nearer the zeitgeist, the spirit of the time, but anyway that's his way of going about things. But all of these people, when I was Deputy Arts Editor, they encouraged me to write. I encouraged myself to write, I did a lot of feature writing. I was often not so useful to them, it was their tolerance that enabled me float around getting to lots of press conferences, and getting to know people and doing all this stuff, and giving in a sense the arts coverage of *The Guardian* a high profile.

But the people in the office never understood that, they always resented the fact that I was sort of not in the office the whole time, although the interface between the real world of arts performance and culture and a newspaper, is of course a crucial, crucial aspect of how you actually get stuff to write about and how you get an understanding of it. Basically newspaper men, newspaper journalists have always believed that you can do almost all of it from within an office, but the fact is that the modern system encourages them to do that even more really, even though it's unnecessary. I mean of course we all know that foreign correspondents, people working for the BBC, wherever they may be. They

have to get out in the real world to give you anything worthwhile. But how you do that is never understood. Basically there's a huge amount of suspicion from those who are putting together these newspapers, and editing them and getting the stuff on the page, great suspicion that we, those who actually get out and know about something are having the life of Reilly, a whale of a time spending their money or the profit or basically possibly being drunk or taking drugs or having sex or God knows what, and none of these things can be done in a newspaper office, particularly not now when even smoking is banned. So one understands that resentment.

But I have to say that my motivation was of course that I was seriously interested which was not good for my career. The fact that I was seriously interested in opera and the theatre and music and knew about them, made me very suspicious to a lot of these people because their basic instinct, Editors, is that you should have somebody who likes these things but who is going to be as ignorant as the readers. Because if you have too much expertise then the writing may be less penetrable or it may assume too much on the part of the reader. Now obviously that trade off is always a problem, it's a complicated trade off as you can see. But in the area of politics and sport the expertise is much more acknowledged than it is in cultural areas I think, and that's partly because politics is the primary motivation for most journalistic exercises. Journalists are in journalism because they want to wield power or they want to get closer to power, they want to change things, they are often idealistic, not always, sometimes very cynical in fact, but nevertheless that was one of their original motives. So politics is understood, it's like the lifeblood of journalism. Sport has become very similar, it's very interesting that Cardus was a cricket correspondent and his position as a music writer was secured by the fact that he was also a very popular cricket commentator. Those two things were two strings to his bow that helped to make him what he became.

Now for anybody like me who was a totally specialised cultural journalist and interested in the theatre and live performance, live performances are really bad things to be interested in really because only a few people can get into these spaces. Unless one is writing about rock music at Woodstock or somewhere where there are thousands and thousands of people. But even then, not everyone can be there at any of these performances. In terms of consumer guidance, of course the change in the prevalence of recordings, the pop music, I mean in a way the invention of recording and of video recording and the arrival of television and radio have completely transformed how people come to all this material and what they're interested in reading about. If you go back to read what Heine or various other commentators, Berlioz, wrote for newspapers about music you realise that they were often writing for an audience that couldn't get to many of these concerts. They were writing for an audience that if it was really versed would have to know how to play the piano, would have to get a score, would have to be able to sit down with a friend and play duets. Nobody could 'have' music unless they were actually 'with' musicians. So how this process has changed over this longer period, which you're not concerned with, is part of the background to how it changed in this particular focussed area in my opinion. (38m36)

With these various changes in Editors did you find that they became more hands-on in terms of how prescriptive they were?

Eventually, I think that after Roger Alton arrived, they became very prescriptive. But before that there was much more freedom. Before the mid 1980s the newspapers, particularly *The Guardian*, well there were reasons for this. As you know in the middle of the 1980s there was the Wapping revolution, everything changed, there was computerisation, there were the chances to defeat the print unions. In theory it should have made more freedom and it did of course produce more work initially for critics in the broader sense because *The Independent*, when did it start? October 1986. Twenty years ago. So obviously 1985 which was the year before *The Independent* started, when I gave up being Deputy Arts Editor, before that period we lived in a much easier time. In fact *The Guardian* was always in competition with *The Times*, and *The Times* experienced some serious strikes, and our circulation expanded and our ability to cover all this stuff was seen as being desirable. So my connections, my interest in writing in an intelligent fashion about all of these different things were very much I think an asset and in fact people who've looked at what I wrote in *The Guardian* have commented, on how much I wrote. I wrote really quite a lot of course during the first part of the 1980s and probably rather more than I wrote in the second part. But I've never really tried to add these things up but it's all there in the public record. So I think that it became, I think the terms of trade were on the brink of changing very radically and that process has in fact continued and the competitiveness of newspapers has not made them better in this country it has made them steadily worse. But that competitiveness is not merely the competitiveness between newspapers it's the

competitiveness between all forms of media and the fact is that in the end, with web logs and with all sorts of other things, these things are to a certain extent self-writing. People can find very complicated, very, very specialised material on the web if they look for it and in the end it's not possible to say that there is nothing available to the interested party in this country. There are things available but they are not usually provided by newspapers. There are different kinds of information becoming available. And also of course people can suck it and see, they can buy records, they can get DVDs, videos, even if a DVD is not the same thing as a live performance of an opera, because it's been filmed by somebody making decisions about what you see and what you're your focus is, nevertheless obviously that's closer than not going at all. So the whole nature of the trade has changed very radically.

So Editors became more hands-on, particularly with Roger Alton coming on board?

I think the difference was that when I was Deputy Arts Editor I was in a position where as long as there was a personal relationship that worked, and there was because Tim Radford, they all liked me and they liked my copy, I mean Stuart Brooke-Wavell was perhaps a little more doubtful because they were slightly jealous of me because I seemed to know so much about these things. I remember Michael White saying 'how did I have the confidence to be a critic, to put forward ideas, and how was it that I was able to, you know comparatively young by their age, to trust my judgement?' Well of course I'd been in the music business for a long time and I did actually know quite a lot and even if my judgement was only subjective I also knew what was my judgement as opposed to what was a broad opinion, and so I always took the view that I didn't want to go and talk to other critics and that the purpose of being a critic is to tell the truth, which of course is not what a lot of critics do. A lot of critics hold a wet finger up to the wind to see which way it's blowing before they make their mind up about what they should say. The fact that I was my own person in this respect, I don't mean I'm a genius, but I was somewhat different however in that respect. And the confidence came from the fact that I wasn't just a consumer of music. I had studied music, I hadn't studied it at the highest level, I hadn't done a music degree, I nearly read music at Oxford but in fact I changed to English. But criticism was something I'd been very familiar with because if you study literature that's one of the things you do, and I'd been a film critic on *Cherwell* when I'd been a student at Oxford and I was really pretty interested in these things. The first time I wrote for *Music and Musicians* was when I was promoting a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and I went to see them and said 'could you write an article?', 'oh well if you write it we'll publish it' they said, so I wrote it. It was really quite bizarre when you think about it. I'd done my first reviews for *Music and Musicians*. I remember my first review was of Roger Norrington, it was a slightly rude review because I was coming from a position of one kind of early music enthusiast and he was a different sort, and I perhaps didn't recognise my prejudices, although he's a talented musician in his way. Opinions about voices incidentally are very subjective, but I am a singer and I do know what goes on when the singer sings. And again, but because I'm a singer and I've been badly reviewed myself in the past, it gave me confidence to say what I thought, and to write what I thought was really going on. That was often shocking to ordinary music lovers but not to the musical profession, not to the singers themselves who often, although there are some who hate me because I never liked them, but nevertheless most singers would say that I wrote the truth about singing and I wrote what was actually happening. So that was different from what lot of critics do in terms of what that represented. (44m47)

Did you feel that there was a hierarchy between the different music genres, in terms of which genre achieved most page space or perhaps the most dominant position on the page?

When I was still Deputy Arts Editor of the arts page I had a huge advantage in terms of helping to get more copy in that I generated or my view about what was important, obviously I had the ear of the monarch. In all these cases I knew much more about the music and the arts than they did, they were the ordinary person intermediary as it were between the expert, myself, although whether a real expert or not, but the purported expert, and the reader and they were trying to make sure that it wasn't too way out on a limb. But there was an advantage, in that it was characteristic, it was more characterful for the paper to spot new things, to give a welcome to for example the powerhouse regime work at the ENO, to write well about things that some other critics in other papers on other arts pages were saying was nonsense. We were part of a shake up of opinion which enabled a whole range of different interpreters in the theatrical side of opera to make their impact and that impact was particularly notable in the early 1980s when the Young Turks took over at the ENO. During the 1970s when I was on *The Guardian* and writing about stuff in the Welsh National Opera, I went down to Cardiff very often. I didn't go up north very much because in those days *The Guardian* had a northern division, and therefore in Manchester, John, I forget his name, but anyway there was a northern Arts Editor,

they carried reviews, they editionalised between the first and the third edition in Manchester so that that they were carrying far more coverage of local theatre, of local music and stuff from around that area. There was a northern Music Critic, Gerald Lerner, and Gerald didn't leave the paper until, I forget when, but it was something like 1991 or so. Yes I spotted this when I was building my database, I got so far through it and I thought hold on this doesn't tie in with what I did for my masters degree and I spotted that were two different editions. Well there were not just two different editions there were four different editions because there was a first and third edition, both in the south and the north. So that meant that we were consuming an enormous amount of reviewing. But what happened when it all began to get more computerised is that editionalising became harder, coping with the new technology became harder so the amount of coverage, in terms of reviewing, shrank radically. It was about a quarter in the end of what it had been, a huge change, a huge degree of neglect. Do you remember when that was from? About 1987 I think. But you could check with somebody at *The Guardian* about that. It's a difficult question. I mean in my recollection, because it's a long time ago, we're talking about 19 years ago, and people who are there now won't know anything about that. In fact they've extended some of the editorialising of it recently over the last five or six years I think. So even though it's all done in London, they closed down the Manchester office as part of this technological development. But even though it's all done in London, which I think is a mistake incidentally, the fact is that they do now have the where with all to editorialise a bit more. But again it's a question of where do you distribute your newspapers from? The northern editions were not printed in London they were printed in the north, well they still are of course, but nowadays with modern technology they can choose, I mean to study that that's not your affair, but they've been through processes where at various stages we were printing in four or five centres and distributing from those centres so *The Guardian* was able to get out to a range of places with copy that was interesting to those localities. But that of course presents another problem - why is it that people living in the first edition areas, the edges, are assumed to be more interested in some tin-pot performance of *The Messiah* at a local church than finding out what's going on in the capital where the best quality work is being done? So that is a major problem in deciding what the purpose of the reviewing should be. These are all very complicated issues.

As you said, and as I found, that *The Guardian* did seem to welcome new things, world music for example came along in the 1980s and it seemed to pick that up quite quickly, but I don't know if that had an impact on the more traditional genres?

Well of course it did, space is limited. Of course when you get more varieties, I mean I don't think world music was noticed until the late 1980s, but the fact is that once you start trying to be democratic as it were in your view of the live performing arts, and obviously world music is a live art, it's interesting because it's stuff that's been recorded when it's really happening. It's like people who recorded A.L. Lloyd recording folk musicians in Eastern Europe or in India and then putting them out on record. People began to become aware of what folk music was and the means for recording it, unlike when Cecil Sharp was doing it and Vaughan Williams in the early twentieth century, or in Ireland when they were trying to catch the last surviving exemplars of people who were folk poets carrying on telling stories. Obviously the technology is infinitely superior so you can record this stuff and then it's good enough quality to put it out on a record. So in a sense the audience for this folk stuff has become very different. If we're talking about world music, world music is a strange affectation, it's a marketed product which is a bi-product of a dying culture which has staggered on because it has had an injection of a certain amount of money and resource. So of course in my view, and I'm not against it, I love folk music, but I think that the superiority of what I would call serious music is unarguable. Of course there's lots of lovely things in pop and rock music, there are good songs and bad songs, just as there are in classical music. But the fact is that the best of rock music, the best of The Beatles is only a smallish song. The best in classical music is, you know, the sky is the limit. It may be a structure which has an enormous range of emotional colour, of narrative, of rhetoric of material that relates to life issues. I mean obviously a very good Beatles song, and there are some wonderful ones, that also relates to life issues, it has words, it touches on things, but it is still a miniature form and I think that one of the real problems about this so called democratisation is the failure to understand the difference between what I would call small miniaturistic endeavours and material which needs to be taken seriously.

I mean it's like the difference between Shakespeare and Enid Blyton. I mean Enid Blyton is a very good writer within her own terms and for those purposes, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, I'm not saying she shouldn't exist. But if we're going to talk about where really serious and where real comedy occurs even, I mean it doesn't have to be serious all the time or tragic, but we need to

have a sense of proportion, we need to say 'what matters? What is the culture that people need to be able to use, that they need to be able to appreciate? Are they as well served, people in lower class communities up and down this country, by simply popular music?' which never touches upon any of this matter. Of course not everybody is going to be interested in serious things. But it's like this question of what's happened within churches. You know, do I feel that evangelical hymns in evangelical Christian churches are up to the mark? Or are they as good as Bach? Are they as good as the best of the nineteenth century? And do the texts have any meaning? Well I find them sentimental crap. I can't remember all their names because they don't interest me at all. I can't bear even to sing. Of course there are exceptions, but if we are going to say 'how do we take seriously this matter, what is better?' well there is no argument about what is better. But of course that doesn't mean to say that T.S. Eliot, if he had chosen to write hymns today, couldn't have written something incredibly comparable and wonderful. What I'm saying is I do believe there are absolute values in culture. I do believe that some things are of infinite importance and that was a very uncomfortable position to adopt in a newspaper world where there is a great anxiety about the rightness and where in a newspaper like *The Guardian* where democratisation and elitism are seen as being counter poles and where there is a deep lack of sympathy for what would be considered elitist. I was always seen as being an upper class person working at *The Guardian* by people who were spuriously working class and I wasn't upper class at all, it was all nonsense really. But there was this feeling that because I liked opera that somehow I was out of touch with ordinary people. Of course we all know that if there was a culture in this country like in Germany then the opera houses and the theatres would be full of ordinary people. But if you start charging the sort of prices that people have to pay to go to the opera is it any surprise that people are all old - the audiences that go? Because when people are young they've got to spend all their money on their kids and they don't have the time.

Did you ever feel that rock and pop or even jazz was elbowing classical music out of the way?

Well of course inevitably, I'm not against having proper coverage of jazz, which is again a strange survival and recreation of a wonderful folk art which has incredible power and is marvellous. I don't love jazz as much but I mean I love some jazz, but I mean it's not one of my obsessions. But the point is that there's only so much space. It's like this issue about live performing arts, they only have room for so many people, there are only so many tickets for sale. In a newspaper, if you only have one arts page, if you're going to have an important jazz review and a famous rock concert being reviewed by Robin Denselow, who does all this stuff on the news, brilliant journalist, lovely guy actually, very modest actually and witty, really good old hand. The fact is that obviously there's going to be less room for classical music in some form or other. I mean we increased the amount of opera, we I say, those of us who were enthusiastic, and the Arts Council, the amount of opera available to the British audience between 1945 and 1995 by a lot, in 60 years a lot more opera was available for people. It went up and down but the Arts Council did encourage it. It was important that it should be written about and taken seriously because otherwise nobody would've known it was going on half the time. How do you nurture an audience? Well there is a real problem with regard to classical music that you know the failure in opera to renew the repertoire, except for of course in England we didn't have an opera repertoire before 1945 of any note. I mean Delius wrote a few works, but obviously Britten's creation for the English speaking world and particularly for our country of an opera repertoire, and Tippett's marginal contribution to that and also Maxwell Davies and a few other people, meant that there was actually a body of work. A lot of it was very popular even though my father's generation thought Benjamin Britten was terrible and a poofter to boot as well. They considered that type of music terribly modern, of course it wasn't terribly modern at all, and Britten is now generally regarded as one of the great masters of twentieth opera alongside Strauss, Puccini and Janacek.

Did you feel that there was a particular date or a moment in time when you felt that things started to shift and that perhaps rock was getting more coverage and you were being asked to write less words?

This is an interesting question because when I was editing *Music and Musicians* I was the first person on *Music and Musicians* to get a rock correspondent. Meredith came over from Australia and we all of us felt that we needed to have stuff on jazz, we needed to have articles on rock, we needed to start to break the mould, we didn't just want to write about classical music. So in those 30 issues that I edited between 1970 and 1973 we did break that mould already by increasing coverage from nothing really, starting coverage of some of these other kinds of music, and also of folk music. I had articles by A.L. Lloyd in *Music and Musicians*, nobody had ever published an article by A.L. Lloyd in *Music and Musicians* before as far as I know. *Music and Musicians*, when I went to it, was a sort of opera fanzine with a certain amount about classical music. That was all there was. There were reviews, there were not very many features. The features end of the paper, the front end of the paper, most of

that stuff was in fact reviews that glorified with lots of pictures. So what I did was increase the pagination, to increase the pay to the people writing the reviews so that we paid them £10 per 1000 words, and often we didn't pay them and it was a very hard to mouth magazine. I used to say to people when we commissioned them 'you may get a pension, we may not pay you immediately, I'm terribly sorry it's terribly difficult getting money out of the publisher'. So we increased the pagination, we reduced the amount of illustration, so we made it a more serious paper in every way. I changed it, I introduced up the front a section called counterpoint which ran from anything from three to eight pages which was a series of news stories, rather like *The Guardian's* arts reviews were in those days, like sausage meat, just going on like that, with pictures in it. So it was a way of increasing the amount of coverage with little crossheads that told people what the story was about, and I also created on *Music and Musicians*, not a title page but the first right hand page inside which described what the articles were, the main features. So we tried to sell the features to the reader through that. That was a complete innovation and that lasted until the newspaper folded. My successor committed suicide or was sacked or something, I can't remember.

But on *The Guardian* was there a point where you felt that classical started to get elbowed out?

Well not really because we'd always wanted to do both and it was a matter of making judgements about everything, a huge spread. So I didn't really feel that there was a conscious attempt at that stage to reduce classical coverage. But we tried to make a fair evaluation. One of the reasons however that I was never made Arts Editor probably had its origin in the fact that I was seen as being so keen on opera in particular, that I might be disproportionate in the attention that I might have paid to opera. Of course that was self-writing if you know what I mean. In the end, if you are put in the position of Arts Editor you have to perform the role of Arts Editor and that means effectively that even though you like opera more you will probably be falling over the backwards the opposite way. But they didn't trust me to fall over backwards the opposite way. (1h01m22)

So when Roger Alton came in he wasn't pushing classical out of the way?

Not really, not initially, but I think that there was a slow process. There were one or two people writing about music from a broader and more populist (perspective), there was somebody called Mike something or other, who also wrote about sport who was known as a sports writer and I think he had a feeling of wanting stuff to be not elitist and wanting to understand stuff. I refer to the fact that at one point that he complained that we didn't tell the stories of operas in our reviews. Well of course you can't tell the stories, by the time you've told the story you've filled up 200 or 300 words. I mean has he never looked at an opera synopsis? So of course we couldn't tell the stories. He said 'nobody has ever explained what has happened in *Così fan Tutti*'. Well of course there's a thumb nail sketch, and this sort of discipline was very valuable to me when I went to *The Evening Standard* because eventually I found a way of having a bit of a hook that explained where we are: 'now here we are, I'm reviewing *Così fan Tutti*, what is that?' Well in a very small number of words you can sort of refer to what the opera is about, its theme and whatever that may be or you can find a way of talking about that in a way that makes sense to an ordinary reader, to do with the true value of love, or infidelity, there are so many things, you know what women and men are like, and can they be trusted. But previously I had always written on the assumption that I was writing for people who were interested in reading a review, and not necessarily for the general reader, and I think that this tendency to want to have stuff written for the general reader has been part of the dumbing down process. Because the idea is that arts coverage ought to be accessible to everybody, well of course that means it's not so useful to people who know something about it all. It's one of those problems, which bits of the paper are meant for who? If you don't assume a certain level of interest you may end up writing or carrying material that is incredibly banal. Obviously these are all compromises, we all have to make such compromises, but I think that sense that newspapers, that the arts coverage needed to be more populist, less elitist and that a writer who was writing from a point of view of expertise, as I was, might err on the side of being too exclusive or assuming too much previous knowledge was one of the factors. But then it's very ironical that as soon as I left *The Guardian* I was quite successful and worked for *The Evening Standard* for six years. I mean that was a much more down-market medium and of course I adjusted myself to it, but that was later, that's after this period.

So this dumbing down, when would you say that started?

It's a terribly difficult thing because, I mean I think I would put it down to the period in the mid 1980s really so that from about 1987 onwards, or 1988, I think there was a more, I wouldn't say aggressive, but a more circumspect, what's the word, a more critical approach to criticism to what was being offered as expert criticism, and one of the requirements that was beginning to be imposed on criticism

was the idea that it should be accessible, that it should not assume too much prior knowledge on the part of the reader, that it would need to explain itself much more. There had always been some Editors who didn't like having any phrases in other foreign languages, that wanted everything to be made very clear and simple. In my opinion good journalism is clear and simple, and not indulgent, and I don't think my stuff was so remote or indulgent. But I always remember being told by an American friend who was a musician and a very clever physicist as well that the Yale School of Journalism taught the best English, and that the whole idea was that if you could make it very clear that you are doing the job as well as it can be done and that's the best literature. Nobody would say that Shakespeare was not accessible to his public when he was writing. However much he may have wanted to, or however many coinages, vast numbers of new words that Shakespeare invented, it was because he was moving the language in a way that made it more understandable. I'm not trying to compare myself with Shakespeare of course but I'm just thinking about what it is that you are trying to do with this kind of coverage.

Just a quick question really, but were you being asked to write more or less of different types of articles, so perhaps less live reviews, more features that kind of thing? (1h6m45)

Of course there was a tendency for the number of features to be increased because when Roger Alton came in he changed the layout of the page, it was still a broadsheet page, but he was inclined to have far more of what I would call feature reviews, in other words instead of having a feature which was clearly an interview feature which was about something or a column, he would want to have a review which he would give a lot of illustration to and which would somehow sex-up the page and make it apparently more interesting to the readers and that would tend to put pressure on space. Once you begin to have more pictures you have fewer words, it's as simple as that. Of course you look back at the pages of *The Guardian* in the 1960s and you'll find there are very few pictures at all in the features areas. I mean the Miscellany page had frankly no pictures. If you look back at pages carrying reviews in the *The Times* in the 1890s there are no pictures, no photographs at all practically, and that was how certain magazines of course made their mark, by being illustrative.

So more feature reviews.

Yes there was a tendency, and I was no longer a Deputy Arts Editor so I was no longer able to be an influence. I mean I could've become, I could've stayed, it was one of the stupidest things I did in my entire career. I think Roger Alton was offended by my not staying to help him, but I just felt that it was time for a new broom. But of course normally people with any journalistic experience know that you wait for the management to move you because you are solving their problem by going back to the back benches. By resigning, which is what I effectively did, it was a really stupid move, instead of giving them a problem to resolve, 'what shall we do with Sutcliffe in order that Roger Alton can have his preferred Deputy after he's been there a year or two?' I just gave them the opportunity to do something straight away. In fact the guy they appointed as Deputy to Roger Alton didn't last and later became quite ill, I think he's still alive, Des Christie, a nice guy who is sympathetic to the arts to a certain extent. But of course things have got wildly dumbed down by comparison with what they were, even in the mid 1980s. I mean the Chief Music Critic they appointed, Tom Service, he's reviewing Wagner operas that he's never seen before. That's the degree of expertise we are talking about.

So you said that he changed the appearance of the arts page, was this to do with the 1988 redesign?

This was before the redesign. As soon as he became Arts Editor he began to change the balance of material on the page, he was free to give stuff whatever space he wanted. He was free to use that space in the way he thought right, and because he'd been a Deputy Arts Editor and therefore in a sense was quite senior in the pecking order rather than somebody appointed from lower down who was being promoted, he was being moved sideways and just a little bit up, he was already more respected and his sense of news values had been honed in the sports area, where of course it was much more significant. I tried to say things to him things like the review is the result, if you compare it to sport, that what the critic writes is in a strange way the result of that particular concert, it may not be the same as goals being scored but it's part of that process so you need to have reviews for that reason. But he did change it, he did begin to carry as I recall it a much wider range of different sorts of feature material and of course he had his own taste, or lack of it, his own knowledge, his own feeling about what mattered and what was interesting.

Did he have a preference for genres?

I don't think he did particularly. He likes classical music but he's the kind of person who listens to Classic FM rather than the third programme, and that sounds a very snobbish thing to say but it is the truth. When Classic FM started I wrote a piece about it. But the success of Classic FM, which was a few years later after he'd moved on from being Arts Editor and become Features Editor I think, but that was part of the process of change in terms of how this kind of material could be more effectively and more broadly marketed. And of course if you look back at The Proms, the old Proms were much more like Classic FM in the pre-war period, in the 1920s or even in the 1900s, than they are like Radio 3 because they used to do one movement of a concerto and then a movement of a symphony. The idea that you should only listen to these pieces as whole, that they can't also be listened to in bits and pieces if you want, is of course silly. But I'm the sort of person who doesn't listen to music unless I'm listening to it, personally. I mean I don't want to have music on the whole time, and my wife doesn't like having the radio on at all practically.

You just mentioned, and again only a quick question, but you mentioned about the use of pictures, did you notice an increase in the amount of picture space?

Absolutely, of course. (1h12m12)

And did that occur during this period or was it later?

Well it started in this period. Don't forget that what we had originally, always we'd had a big picture on the arts page and then a little bit of type around it, a feature. I mean the first time I ever wrote for *The Guardian* from Bayreuth, in 1972 there was a huge picture, my piece about Bayreuth covered most of the page and then there were a few reviews at the bottom. So there'd been that flexibility for years. It wasn't just that you had one feature and a column down the right and then reviews underneath like sausage meat. There were different ways of doing the page and there always had been. When I was put onto doing these late shifts I had to layout and do the panel that would be the dominant element on the page and of course when Roger Alton came there were lots of other ways of doing all these formulas. Newspaper layout, there's many ways of doing the page, frankly. (1h13m20)

And that had an impact on the number of words?

Well inevitably, if you explain more and display more, you know there's a little piece which explains what the article is about which they used to call the standfirst or often referred to as a standfast, because nobody realised that what it was saying was stand first, and that would have originally have been at the top of a column for the actual material. It's still often done in Germany, you see in slightly larger type a little bit that sort of implies what the piece is about and then it goes into it. That would be called a standfast. But in fact if you've got a feature and you've got a heading which is going to draw attention to itself and shouts at you then you would also have a bit of an explanation, so how many lines would that be? Well if you have that and you have a picture which is across five columns or four columns, or if it's an eight column format or six column format, say it was a six column format so the picture might be across five columns or three columns, well obviously if you've got a big picture there and then you've got all this stuff underneath before you actually start. If you've got block structure. Of course there are numerous other ways of editing a page. The *Daily Telegraph* in those days didn't have everything squared up, it used to sort of run them together and it was all an extraordinary other game of how you assembled material and you assume that people's eyes would move through it and they would find what they want. It's all part of the game of writing newspaper journalism. Of course when you move the space down and you have a smaller page, such as the *Berliner*, inevitably there's less room so the reviews in the *Berliner* are half the length of what they were in the old *Guardian*. I criticised Alan Rusbridger for deciding to reduce from tabloid, because in my view broadsheet journalism is much more flexible and *The Guardian* didn't go tabloid it went *Berliner*, but even so the *Berliner* format doesn't seem to enable them to carry reviews that are any longer than the tabloid format of *The Times*, except for what *The Times* does is usually only have two reviews on a page plus an ad or something else if you've looked at how *The Times* now functions, and they are terribly short reviews, I mean basically they are almost useless.

Would you tie in the increase in picture space to that Editorial change?

To the competitive fears that were associated with the reduction in costs that Murdoch achieved with *The Times* and the arrival of *The Independent* and all these other newspapers. At that point my escape route appeared in terms of *The Guardian* from being just a Sub Editor in the most basic way in the Features Department, which they tried to put me back into, and they created what's called an

obituaries page. There was no obituaries page on *The Guardian* before about 1987 and it was created in order to answer the competition of *The Independent*, which had an obituaries page. *The Times* had always done obituaries but *The Guardian* had never bothered except when it was somebody very famous, Kennedy or the Pope. So now *The Guardian* brought in Waldemar Januszak, who'd been our whiz kid young Arts Correspondent and critic, he was promoted to be Literary Editor and Bill Webb who'd been Literary Editor for twenty years was given the boot and was pushed into being Obituaries Editor alongside Christopher Driver who'd been a Features Editor before Peter Preston had been. And they created this, Christopher Driver who is a very nice man and Bill Webb, created the obituaries page. And the obituaries page became a whole register of cultural material in a sort of way because as people died who had been cultural we would carry obituaries which really filled people in on that history. So in a way that was another area of feature journalism which they suddenly opened up and that was entirely due to the competition. I myself was moved towards, by the Features Editor Richard Gott who had helped me in the course of the 1980s, to review quite a lot of stuff in Germany. The fact is that obviously I was writing about lots of stuff that I got to see while I was working for *The Guardian* and that's partly because this Marxist Editor Richard Gott had encouraged me to go and see stuff and was supportive and paid my expenses. So for a period *The Guardian* served me enormously well and my specialisation was hugely enhanced by all of that. Without their appetite for some of this coverage it would have been very difficult to do anything. They're still doing a bit of that coverage but much less than I was able to do at one point, and now that I do stuff for *Opera Now* I travel a lot more in Germany.

(End of part 1 of recording)

So you've touched upon some of the other questions that I wanted to ask. I wanted to ask about new publications entering the market, and you've talked about *The Independent* already.

Yes and there was also *The Sunday Correspondent* and various others. They all were looking for people to write about these things. So for a period there was a sense in which, I mean there were people being hired from *The Guardian* to go and work for these at huge increases in salary and so on. It all looked terribly wonderful like the promised land. For *The Independent*? Well not just *The Independent* but *The Sunday Correspondent* and there was a daily newspaper started by Captain Bob Maxwell as far as I can remember, an evening paper in competition with *The Standard*. But there were people who went to these things who then sank without trace. So a lot of it was fools gold but there were people who appeared to be being offered wonderful chances to go off and do these major jobs and create new pages and have a wonderful time. It was all a great shake up. It was all part of the new, and in many ways better economic circumstances, of the Thatcherite era because you know there's no question that the Conservatives transformed the prospects for people economically in this country. Things were disastrous. When I first went to *The Guardian* the whole thing was controlled by the unions. Although the Editors edited, in the end the unions were the most powerful factor in the whole business and that really didn't make sense. But the new technology obviously also provided opportunities, but fewer than it should've done in many ways, and in ways of course that they didn't understand.

Even *The Guardian's* website, something like a third of the people who look at *The Guardian's* website are in the United States. Two thirds in Britain, but a third in the United States which is a huge number but that's because in a way *The Guardian* serves an appetite today which isn't catered for adequately by the newspaper provision in the States which is still very conservative and as you know is located in particular huge conurbations, whether you are in Houston or Dallas, there's always at least one local newspaper of note and that is virtually what they read. *The New York Times* does circulate but to a very small number outside the New York area. *The Los Angeles Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, each of these places has their own paper and they have a correspondent and the music critic in Seattle can't really write the truth about crap at the opera because he knows the guy who is putting it on. It's all part of local enterprise. They're doing what a friend of mine, Dale Harris, used to call national service. He would say 'critics doing national service' because they can't really say anything very bad because this is something that matters too much, you know 'we need to think that we are the best'. A lot of criticism of the theatre or whatever it is, cultural criticism, is really there to reassure the British reader that everything is in a good state and we're the best and everything is going wonderfully. There is this, so anybody who writes who is too critical puts their job at risk in fact. (3m29)

When *The Independent* launched was there a direct impact?

Well there was an effect on circulation.

But were they saying *The Independent* is doing x, y or z, therefore we need you to do x, y or z?

All newspapers editorially tend to be copycat. But I think that tendency has become much more prevalent. Newspapers are edited on the sheep principle, they've all got to be doing the same thing. I think that to be honest in the old days on *The Guardian*, when we were making our own track, we were completely independent, we chose to do what we wanted, and I think that this sense of how competition worked. So more meant worse, as Kingsley Amis always used to say, that with newspapers, with universities, more would be worse, and I think to some extent that's true. But with newspapers I think it certainly is true. That the competition actually meant everybody became more self-conscious about whether they got it right and whether the readers would prefer to have this or that, and there was much less confidence in the idea that we would set our own course and we would cover this stuff and we would do it come what may. *The Guardian* could have done that because *The Guardian* was a charity, it's not profit making it runs by the Scott Trust, so *The Guardian* had this right to do that but it sort of hasn't really sort of used that right. It's turned its back on all that and wanted to be a success and Alan Rusbridger earns £370,000 pounds a year and that's more important to him than, as it were, fulfilling perhaps the virtuous duty of *The Guardian* as it was created. (5m11)

So everybody becoming more self conscious because there was greater competition and perhaps being less independent.

Less independent and more anxious about the real terms of trade, about whether in fact their jobs would be there. The danger being that if *The Guardian* continued to make a loss that wasn't being, it always made a loss of course in the 1960s and 1970s, but that wasn't being funded by *The Manchester Evening News* or by other local newspapers owned by the group then the end was nigh. There is a sense of realism, of course there has to be, about what you can do in any field, and that's not something to be surprised by.

Again, we've sort of touched upon this already. But I was interested in the political climate and Thatcherism and how that may have affected music journalism?

There was a thing called *The Glory of the Garden* which was a report on the live performing arts, or on what the Arts Council was doing by William Rees-Mogg, Lord Mogg, one of the baddies I think of British journalism and of British life, but anyway. Mrs Thatcher initially faced a world where all the cultural, the great media physicians and all the people who were going to be doing anything to do with culture were certainly opposed to her. She was much hated by everybody. I mean I was one of the very few journalists who both voted conservative three times for Mrs Thatcher and also wrote in *The Spectator* and other things. I was very counter-cyclical and certainly I must obviously look for trouble, so that when Mrs Thatcher came in I became known as a journalist on *The Guardian* who was sympathetic to what she was trying to do. But I wasn't sympathetic to everything, I wasn't sympathetic to all aspects of her cultural anxieties, her feeling that people should pay because I knew perfectly well that opera and theatre, real theatre, couldn't be self-sufficient. They couldn't make enough money even though in London there is this hugely profitable musical theatre tradition and all these musicals. You have to remember the big change was that in the 1970s there were a lot of entrepreneurs putting on spoken theatre, putting on straight plays, people like Michael Codron and others like Michael White who put on *The Rocky Horror Show*, which was a musical actually but nevertheless I mean it was also quite a lot of spoken theatre. So what really happened was that the musical theatre which was the profitable bit of London theatre began to expand and become more and more dominant so that in the end 18 or 20 of London's 38 or 40 theatres are in fact occupied by musicals. They weren't, I mean what there used to be was about six or seven musicals. There's a huge transformation. And those musicals didn't need to be reviewed and the theatres didn't need to be reviewed. Of course there was a growth in small scale theatre. But in other words the subject matter was changing. I think as far as concerts were concerned, well of course the Barbican Hall opened. I remember in something like 1983 or 1984 that the London Symphony Orchestra ceased to play on the South Bank. Previously we'd been reviewing concerts as a matter of course on the South Bank and almost every day there was a concert on the South Bank by an orchestra and if not there, there were concerts at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Purcell Room and they were all classical music, all of them. There was never a pop music concert of the South Bank. The new halls had been opened in 1967, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery and they were part of a completely different tradition so you didn't find Indian classical musicians playing there. You didn't find much in the way of jazz, or anything like that, jazz was at Ronnie Scott's Club. So there was a

huge amount of classical music provided and don't forget that in the days of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone's council subsidised the English National Opera at the Coliseum, it subsidised all the music on the South Bank and therefore there was no question about the fact that there was money put forward for people to put on small scale concerts there.

There was a thing called the London Orchestral Concerts Board (LOCB) which enabled me to put on an early music concert in 1967 with Musica Reservata, and the feeling was that the music and the concerts that should be there should be constant, apart from a period in the summer when the whole thing would close down and give everybody a holiday, and even then they had a special summer festival which they created with Daniel Barenboim and various other people, way back where they played together as friends and Jacqueline Du Pre and so on and a group of them did a lot of wonderful chamber music in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in the summer, it was one of the first summer fests or whatever they called it then. Was that in the late 1960s, or the early 1970s? It was probably the early 1970s. Anyway, the fact is that a structure under Ken Livingstone and the Greater London Council existed for all of that and there was nowhere else, there was the Wigmore Hall, which was very cheap in those days, and where many people could go and make their debut as a pianist or as a singer and afford to pay for it themselves. Now the Wigmore Hall has nothing but successful international artists and it's very expensive to go there. But there is no outlet for the young, and the untried and the new. When I was coming up as a musician in the 1960s and singing at Westminster Cathedral there were outlets, we could go and find money, you didn't have to be an established person with a sponsor and a status set up as a charity, with proper tax status, you'd go to the London Orchestral Concerts Board. There was a man called George Mann in an office overlooking the Thames just at the very front of The Festival Hall under the walkway, and you could go in there and you could see him and he'd say 'that sounds rather interesting, yes you can have £800' or whatever it was. And in my case at the age of 25, or was I 23? 1967 I was 24, you would be given enough backing and you would find a few other backers and you would be able to put on a concert. In my case at the Queen Elizabeth Hall seating 1100 people, something like 30 or 40 musicians and the entire concert a sell it out. I mean I did all of that, I put up all the ads, I published the program, I sold space in it and all and the rest of it. So what I'm trying to say is that it was a completely different climate and that once Mrs Thatcher came in and privatised certain things, put pressure on others, and once the GLC came to an end, the ending of the GLC and Mrs Thatcher's abolition of Ken Livingstone as it were, had huge cultural consequences for London. Huge cultural consequences. People didn't really understand what those consequences were at the time but for any of us who have lived through it it's now quite clear. People have forgotten because again it's a slow process, while it's happening you don't notice. But in fact the result of that was that from then on, of course the LOCB of which William Glock had run the third program, was the Chairman, was an organisation partly funded by the GLC and partly by The Arts Council, it was Arts Council money. But nobody was at the Arts Council saying 'why are you giving money to these unknown people who aren't very good?' There was no tradition of backing success, of wanting to make people pay the maximum that could be paid. Mrs Thatcher's policy at The Arts Council after The Glory of The Garden was that users should pay, so people who wanted to go to the opera, what happened at the ENO was that, under Peter Jonas, gradually instead of being given increases in grant they were being encouraged to see how high they could raise the ticket prices to fund themselves which inevitably had a consequence that opera became more elitist. Instead of the price being right for anybody to go to, you got a situation where you had to be rich to go to these things. You didn't have to be, because there were some tickets in worse parts of the house or the gallery, and I went to the gallery when I was a kid, that's where I first saw Carmen in the Kings Theatre, Southsea, and presumably the ticket costs sixpence or threepence, it was a very small price in those days and we're talking about 1947. But what I'm really saying is that the accusation that these things were elitist was self-generating because if the prices went up of course they were more elitist.

If Covent Garden became more expensive of course it was more elitist. So Mrs Thatcher's pressure on The Arts Council, the feeling that The Arts Council would no longer be proactive. If you read *The Stage* today there are letters about whether The Arts Council is proactive. The Arts Council is not there to make more culture happen now, it's there to try and channel the minimum support for the maximum consequence, and it's now also giving an enormous amount of money to ethnic things. If we're talking up to the mid 1980s there was practically no Arts Council money devoted to any ethnic arts. The Greater London Council gave a little bit of money to ethnic things because Ken Livingstone's a very broad minded person who wants to support local things. But now, for political correctness reasons, if you look at who is actually on the advisory board for The Greater London Arts and all of those other organisations, you will find that somebody like me with my expertise is not

wanted because we're thought to be elitist and our expertise is all about old arts and performing arts as they were of the past, whereas what they really want is people who are in touch with the new ethnic communities. So huge sums of money are being channelled into all of those things which is nothing in my view to do with recognising the traditions that we need to maintain because they are part of our history. There is a need for there to be local theatres up and down London and there are none, there are no theatre companies in London at all and of course the amount of music at the Barbican has increased, but The Barbican actually does a lot of stuff that isn't music, it's also a business men's conference hall, and the LSO is there. There are only two orchestras now on The South Bank, they're sharing residency, and other organisations find it much harder to get in. And although it makes more sense to have a larger audience, in other words to do the same program five times, which is what happens in American cities but doesn't happen in England, it would make more economic sense, but really the need is to nurture the audience, the way to nurture the audience is low ticket prices and convenience of access, and also range of program and marketing. But in order to do that you need to have subsidy being fed in from the local authorities and from The Arts Council and you need many more concert halls dotted around the place. So the centralisation meant that this citadel of culture was very easy to knock down, and Mrs Thatcher knocked it down effectively and changed it. And it was also the city, which had always been a great source of funding for stuff, Peter Stuyvesant, supported the LSO for years, the cigarette manufacturer, but once the Barbican came in there was subsidy from the city directly, because the city felt it should raise it's flag as being culturally significant, which it never had been really, apart from if you look historically you can see that the Lord Mayor used to support this that and the other a bit, but not in this consistent way. So the competition between that hall the South Bank and the Albert Hall, which was the big summer festival done by the BBC. And then the BBC began to reduce the number of orchestras which it supported too. The Arts Council took over the responsibility for regional orchestras so the plural sources of funding for the classical traditions were reducing, at the same time as all of this was going on, and this was very much a consequence in the mid 1980s, of the change in politics. (17m50)

We've already touched upon industrial, technological, musical and cultural developments, is there anything you think I should have asked about, in terms of the general climate?

Well one thing you could have asked was why was it that the new technology which enabled people to write remotely, to use electronics to get stuff home, why was the increase in communication facility not associated with an increase in choice, in terms of what could go into the papers?, and that was partly to do with change in technology which was hard to absorb and also the issue of distribution and where you print. So the costs of distribution in a competitive market probably went up somewhat for a newspaper like *The Guardian* I think. I mean *The Guardian* was doing well on the whole. It benefited from the strikes that led to Murdoch's owning *The Times* and taking over *The Times* because if you remember *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* used to be owned by Lord Thompson, the Canadian media man, and once *The Times* was able to, I forget when *The Times* was bought when Murdoch, but it was in the early 1980s, it seems as if he's been around forever, but if you think about it he only bought *The Sun* in about 1969 and turned it into the tabloid success and *The News of the World* he then bought, that his acquisition of *The Times* in, I can't remember exactly when, but it was something like the early 1980s. It was his way of coping with the problems, *The Times* ate money. Murdoch came in and saw that there were all these problems associated with *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Times* of course did make money, but he needed to be able to make much more money rather than giving it to these robbers, these barons, and so that's why he did the Wapping thing. But Wapping was obviously a hugely significant change and it was made possible by the different ways of distribution. But Murdoch had lots and lots of money from *The Sun* which he'd made into a huge tabloid success and *The News of the World*. So he was sitting on this great pile of money. I mean he's a genius in his own way in the sense that he created this absolutely extraordinary phenomenon. I mean he owns horrible Fox Television in The States but he's not a stupid man. So he wanted to make as much money as possible out all these things and make them into a success and he in fact hasn't succeeded in overtaking *The Sunday Telegraph* but he certainly has succeeded in placing *The Times* two or three hundred thousand circulation above *The Guardian* which obviously has a huge effect, and in a way I think his real use of *The Times* is actually to compete with *The Daily Mail*. In fact *The Times* if you look at it now is like a slightly up-market version of *The Mail* and it's slightly less frenetic and foaming at the mouth. (21m21)

So *The Guardian* actually benefited from the change?

I think *The Guardian* benefited in the sense that the technology was there but we weren't able to editorialise, we had to reduce the amount of coverage. Partly there was less to write about in terms of

concerts in London and so on, gradually there was less because of the change in the GLC no longer subsidising The South Bank, but also we were less able to manage the range of material and we had to focus more on what we thought was important and that means that things that are a valuable part of the spread from the point of view of the public get less attention. *The Guardian* used to review a certain amount at the Wigmore Hall but it stopped reviewing the Wigmore Hall concerts much, much, much sooner than *The Daily Telegraph*, which used to have a critic who went to virtually everything at the Wigmore Hall and reviewed it all. *The Daily Telegraph* in the 1970s and through the 1980s I think had somebody called David Money who went to every night, he reviewed every night at the Wigmore Hall. *The Guardian* only reviewed a very small proportion of things at the Wigmore Hall and very few of what was at the Purcell Room. But we did have three music critics in London. They weren't all employed on staff, Ted Greenfield was on staff, Meirion Bowen wrote very regularly, I mean I wrote a certain amount and Hugo Cole wrote. I mean you've seen all these names in the 1980s. So there was a huge amount of music coverage when you get down to it. Hugo is dead, Ted is very old and unwell and Bill Bowen has had a stroke and you won't be able to talk to him, so I'm probably your best bet in this area. You should talk to Gerald Larner because he was the northern Music Critic throughout this period and if you are going to look at what happened in *The Guardian*, which is very interesting, as an overall response to all these changes, it's a very interesting period actually you're going to have a very good time. But you should go and do Gerald Larner. You must try and get to Gerald Larner, I think that's really important. Don't mention my name to him, I mean don't say that you've spoken to me because he's very unfriendly towards me but he really will be useful for you honestly. Particularly because of having been northern music critic and having seen it all from the north, I mean he's a real elitist in terms of what he thinks is important and he'll give you a very, very good supply of material about this, I think he'd be very valuable as the other side of *The Guardian* that you'll need to know. Because throughout that period there was a northern edition, I can't remember when it stopped, probably 1987 or 1988, I can't remember when they closed down *The Guardian* in Manchester. But for at least eight years it was all going on in the north, maybe into the early 1990s. I think throughout the 1980s I think we still had a full set up in Manchester, not a full set up but, you know, an adequate set up, but we certainly did the arts up there.

I just assumed that with all the extra pages that you would have all benefited from writing larger articles?

But we didn't have extra pages, but we could've had extra pages. We didn't really have extra pages, I mean that's the truth. I mean the extra pages for the arts happened from the early 1970s onwards but they weren't much extra, I mean there was one page and then occasionally there would be something at the weekend and yes there might be extra pages coming in when *The Guardian* created the second section for example, but in fact that was a sort of smaller scale, it was tabloid or something, I mean I can't remember all the details of that but my recollection is that it didn't really add to the opportunities. It just changed the range of material which would be covered in features terms. It didn't really benefit reviewing at all, in fact I think further reduced the reviewing in my recollection. But that may not have been until the very end of the 1980s or early 1990s, I'm not quite sure when *Guardian 2* was created, it might have been 1989 or something like that, because I seem to remember that obituaries were at the back of that at some stage and then they went back into the tabloid. There things were always changing, they were always trying to find a better way of doing it.

I was going to ask about music advertising and if that affected your work?

Not really at all. Obviously there were a few concert ads and sometimes the ENO would come in and maybe if they didn't like the critic that might have been a factor but we weren't really affected. That was important when I was selling space on *Music and Musicians* in the late 1960s but it didn't really affect the newspaper because newspapers ads are too expensive. I mean maybe little listings ads might have begun to figure at a stage but they weren't really significant I think for most of the 1980s. (27m05)

So your output wasn't cut in half because of a great a increase in advertising?

That's a different issue. The decision to allow or not allow advertising on the arts page would of course affect how much space you had to deal with. Once *The Financial Times* allowed advertising on the arts page it seriously affected their arts coverage. So if the arts page was one where ads were not allowed, and that was the case for a lot of this time, for most the 1980s, I don't think there were ads on the arts page until they created *Guardian 2*, and then they could take ads on various of the pages that were devoted to the arts because advertisers liked to be beside editorial copy that they like. But on the whole the rates for ads in *The Guardian* were too high for anybody concerned with the arts

really. So the question is, I don't think it was a major factor but once you start allowing ads on a broadsheet page, before you know very much about it you've got the whole bottom third taken up by ads and that means you've only got two thirds of the page so that has a huge effect. It's all to do with the policy over whether particular pages allow ads or not.

But it didn't affect you in the 1980s?

Well it did affect us eventually, but I can't remember when that started to happen, but initially as I recall it we didn't carry ads on the arts page at all. But I can't remember when we started having different sections and when the arts coverage went into this sort of different type of paper. So if you want to come back to me about that you can. You'll have to look at the stuff up at Colindale or whatever.

... (Part B) ...

Finally, just to throw it open to you. I'm looking at changes in music journalism in the broadsheets, *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Independent* in particular between 1981 and 1991, is there anything obvious that I've missed that you think I should've covered?

I don't think there is. I've talked to you so endlessly and you've got all that stuff. I think you've got huge amounts of material. The changes in music journalism you can see that here were changes in music provision, changes in the way that subsidy operated, the abolition of the GLC was of major consequence, the change in local governments also had an effect. Whether the Halle was supported, *The Guardian* was the house newspaper of the Halle Orchestra. If you can get through to, which you really must, Gerald Larner, you have to talk to him, you can't do this without talking to him because he was the northern Music Critic. There is in fact probably a northern Arts Editor who you could talk to. You could talk to some of the southern Arts Editors, and you probably should, I mean they're all there, you could talk to Patrick Ensor very easily, he would be able to fill you in a great deal about all of this, he's still working as the Editor of *The Guardian* weekly. You could talk to Tim Radcliffe who lives down in Hastings and who is still writing occasionally for the paper and who was an Arts Editor for a time. You could talk to Roger Alton, he's the *Observer* Editor, he'll talk to you about the middle of the age. I would recommend you to talk to Patrick Ensor and Roger Alton as being the people who are most readily accessible and as people who have also seen more of the game because they have risen and seen the changes as they went on. They can think back to how things were and they're both very sharp as journalists. I mean I like Roger, Roger lives not very far from here, but in a way I don't like him because he could have made me, and should've probably, many people think, made me Opera and Music Critic of *The Observer* but he chose to appoint Tony Holden who knows nothing, but that's all part of this issue. Tony Holden has written a biography of Tchaikovsky and is a very engaging writer in the broader sense and is a mate of Roger's, but he doesn't know anything about music or indeed hasn't seen much opera, and then he writes these columns. But the question of what expertise ought to be being made available is also an issue. Tony writes his stuff and it was Roger's decision to appoint him. When I was fired from *The Standard* and Fiona Maddocks was brought from *The Observer* to *The Standard*, I wasn't fired I mean my contract wasn't renewed, I mean obviously I hoped that, it was a bit obvious I suppose for her to go to *The Standard* and me to go to *The Observer* because we'd have just done a straight swap and perhaps that was one of the reasons that Roger didn't want to do that. But nevertheless it was somewhat depressing that I didn't get another position because there's a huge amount of experience, but in another way of course it's great freedom, and I do lots of other things, so life changes.

I think those Editors are quite important at *The Guardian*, and Tom Sutcliffe, my namesake at *The Independent* who is easy to get to, is another person you should talk to because he came in and created the arts pages at *The Independent*, and he came in with the idea that rather than having critics, and Bayan Northcott would be an interesting person to touch base with, Tom Sutcliffe came in and his idea was to commission every single review. That was one of the ideas he had. Because he'd been the Editor of *Kaleidoscope* at the BBC and before that another program at the BBC and he was a BBC General Trainee, he had the idea that he would commission every review. Well of course in a way every review is commissioned, but the system that has existed, as I hope you've realised, was that we didn't commission all the reviews, they were mostly commissioned by the senior critic in the nearest art forms and how this changed was that a list, and this is very important, at the beginning of each week or looking at the week ahead or looking two weeks ahead, or at some point in different papers, the Arts Editor and the senior voices in the particular art forms would work out what was going to be reviewed in the week ahead or in the fortnight ahead or whatever period they were looking at, and

they would usually take the advice of the Music Critic. But if there was a period when there was too much coming in then obviously you might have to drop some reviews or not publish them but you don't want to be paying for copy that freelancers have written that you can't use. So these are sort of self-writing processes, but obviously our appetite for reviews when we had a northern and a southern edition both of them editorialising and carrying a lot of outlying stuff in Scotland and God knows what, or in the west of England, we needed to have enough stuff. There was much more flexibility, we couldn't always tell what we'd have room for in advance, it was a much less scientific process so we were much more open. We would occasionally not publish reviews, but we would also publish lots. So we would perhaps have more copy than we'd need and we would try to get it right, it wasn't an exact science. As time has gone on I think that Arts Editors, I mean they still do, there is a guy called Mark Pappenheim who still commissions for *The Independent*, but Tom Sutcliffe coming in to *The Independent* thinking that they could commission every single review was actually a radical transformation. Instead of having a river of reviewing, a little stream in each art form that keeps going and you simply take your water out of it and put it into the paper as it were, your reviews are coming along, that system is going on and you know that there is always going to be a supply of coming in. Because that's how most newspapers work, they don't publish everything, they've got stuff coming in from reports. Most newspapers in the past worked on the basis that there was a stream of copy coming in from which you would take the best. So what I'm saying about writing not to length but writing enough so that it would present itself as being good is merely part of that tradition, of a stream of copy coming in from which the best would get published. But of course as the system changed to give the possibility of commissioning very exactly to length, with computers doing word counts exactly with the whole thing being able to be managed in a much quicker and much more clear fashion, that has put huge pressure, that began to put pressure on, that new system. In one sense the blog can be as long as it likes but the newspaper is a format which is a finite, and newspaper pages have been getting smaller. So there is the chance of commissioning exactly to length and there is also, we've moved from an age where there was more culture going on, more stuff, more interest in what was going on at the grass roots, to one where success and the manufacturing of success has become more important. So for example, just like in book publishing, books are now published but the ones that really matter to the publishers are the ones that sell a hundred thousand copies through every outlet and the book shop at the local level where the book seller will have a relationship with the book purchaser, and there will be all sorts of different books going in, that in a sense is a different market, it's a different way of functioning just as the web blog is a different way of functioning, the specialist magazine has a different way of functioning.

So all I'm really saying is that we've been living through a period where the rich have got much richer and the poor have got much poorer, where the cultural trend has been towards that which everybody likes and away from that which only a few like, and the coverage in newspapers has been defined by that process I think, because the newspapers in a sense have felt that they would be at risk if they didn't simply go along with this radical change and what you see is an economy of scale whereby the most successful can be reproduced and can become the taste of all and the least successful, the specialist, is something that is very much only of interest to a small number, a very low level of life, if you see what I mean. That's really what your thesis is about. (1h05m33)

Part B

So I think you've said already you were freelance for the *Sunday Times*, is that right?

Yes, and for *NME* as well. I was the Editor of *The Wire* magazine.

At the same time?

The same time as doing the *Sunday Times* yes, that was from 1986 or 85, the end of 85 or beginning of 86. Anyway, I was at *The Wire* until 1992, then I went to Polygram. I did the odd bit of freelance writing while I was at Polygram although not very much.

So how did you actually get the job at the *Sunday Times* then, were you interviewed, did you apply for it?

I can't quite remember. The guy, John, I forget what his name was. I think he phoned me up and said he was looking for some jazz pieces and he'd heard about me and was I interested in doing things? It was as simple as that really. (6m50)

Had he read some of your work somewhere else?

I don't know. I remember I had lunch with him some time after that and we talked about what I might do and things like that. I think I'd just been recommended by someone, I don't know who it was. Again that's an example of how *laissez faire* it can be. It's funny, it can be a really *laissez faire* thing, it can just be a matter of sheer luck how you get into these positions. I mean, if the Editors turned round and said 'right we need a new jazz writer', they wouldn't place an ad and then interview six different applicants. They'd say something like 'does anyone know someone who's good?', and someone would say 'well I think he's all right, why don't you give him a try?' and it can be almost as pot luck as that. It does seem extraordinary, but you know. But I suppose if you're rubbish, the trouble is, this is what drives me mad in a sense because I see people who've obviously lucked into these positions and I think well actually, it's only because technically you're OK, but actually you're talking a load of bollocks. But I know that, but your Editor probably doesn't know that. That's what happens. Which may equally be true in other areas or arts journalism. I mean you could put yourself up as a great writer on ballet but actually know bugger all about it but if it sounds as if you know what you're talking about. There's also an aspect of how professional you are. If you're very bad about turning in copy on time and you're all over the place then Editors are going to get pretty tired of that very quickly. But if you're very efficient about getting copy in and it doesn't need a lot of work then they like you because it saves them time.

I'm guessing as well that they have a house style as well, so to some extent they would want someone whose writing fits into their house style?

Oh yes, I mean if you're going to write like a tabloid writer then you shouldn't be writing for a broadsheet.

I'm just wondering how they know, if you don't have to apply for a job and take along a portfolio of your previous work or something, how they know if your style is going to fit in. I wonder if the Editors are doing their research on people before they ask them, how they know that a certain writer is going to fit in.

Well I suppose you do a couple of almost like trial pieces and if they simply don't work then they wouldn't put the pieces in and they'd say well actually you're not right for us.

And when they approached you in the first place did they say we'll run a couple and see how it goes?

I don't think they'd be as up front about it as that. They'd say 'oh great welcome aboard' and then two weeks later 'well actually it didn't work out, goodbye'. I imagine, I mean again I can't say, since I've never been a broadsheet Arts Editor I couldn't say but I'd think it's a bit like that. And actually if you look at broadsheets you do sometimes see unfamiliar names coming and going so it looks as if that person's had a trial at it and then they're gone.

In terms of levels of pay, did the *Sunday Times* have a fixed rate per number of words, so was there a fixed rate for a 500 word article?

No, as I remember they paid by the piece, I can't remember how much it was, but you got X pounds for that week's piece or whatever. I think if it was a big piece it was more, but I don't think you got more if you wrote 450 words than if you wrote 400 say. I don't think so. I could be wrong but I'm pretty sure it was a standard thing.

OK, so a flat rate possibly increased and decreased with size.

Some writers are on retainers aren't they? You've got diarists and things like that who are basically paid a stupid amount of money per year for their inane ramblings to appear in these papers.

Were there different rates for a review, or a preview or an event guide, or an obituary? Would they command different rates or was it just to do with size?

No I think it was just size.

I'm guessing if you were freelance, were you offered any other type of rewards from the *Sunday Times*, such as pensions or anything?

No, you must be joking. No, not a bit of it. No perks like that.

No job security?

No, no job security. (12m30)

OK. So no other reward just the flat rate per piece that got published. But I'm guessing record companies sometimes offered incentives, freebies, trips and things? You read a lot about music writers being offered free trips abroad, but I'm guessing nothing from the *Sunday Times* in that respect. It would come from the music company perhaps?

Well the *Times* did pay for its own trips, I don't think they accepted that kind of thing. Again I was doing jazz stuff and I wasn't really offered free trips. So when I went to the North Sea Jazz Festival for instance, when I interviewed Garbarek, they paid all my travel expenses. I don't think the culture of junkets, which was much more the *NME* culture of things, was really the same thing at all with the broadsheets.

Yes I started to think it may not have been the case in the 80s, it was probably more of a 70s thing.

Well no, it still went on the *NME*, I mean we were always going away on trips and things, well I say always, quite a lot. I travelled the world, I went to Africa, America all over Europe. Having said that I wouldn't fly first class or anything like that. But I hadn't travelled much at that point and it was exciting for a young man in the prime of his life. It was at a sort of subsistence level, I mean they weren't constantly buying you presents or giving you drugs or anything like that. No there wasn't any of that, getting you prostitutes or anything like that, well nothing like that ever happened to me anyway. I think it was a bit more debauched possibly in the 70s. But it wasn't, well again this is an example of how it became more regimented. The companies began to be more...(more corporate?)...more corporate and more about what's going to work for our business here. Life was not one big long party the way it sometimes seemed to be in the 70s. (15m02)

I wonder if that's something to do with Thatcherism, that business mentality?

Could be. It was also much more about the music business which became much more globally orientated in its outlook, certainly from a pop point of view. You really want artists to have international success now, it's not enough to have success in one territory. It's much more about making people into world wide stars so you can maximise your income from them, that's really how the companies work now. I mean you can be a big star in Britain but if you're a complete nobody, and this is the problem that Robbie Williams has had, if you're a complete nobody in America that's actually a bit of a problem for your company. (15m50)

As far as you are aware did music journalists, who covered the different genres, so classical, opera, jazz, roots music, rock pop, were they getting the same or similar remuneration, or hypothetically would a classical person get paid more money?

That's an interesting one. I suspect, I don't know for sure, I mean I would think that some of the more senior writers would be on more of a kind of retainer situation.

Would it be people that were on the staff who that would get more?

I don't know if there were people on the staff who were contributors in that sense. I don't think anyone on the *Sunday Times*, I mean this is the difference between *The Independent* because they had

people who had Sholto Byrnes who's a staffer at *The Independent*, or has been up until fairly recently, I mean he also did a lot of the jazz coverage, he's a staffer at *The Independent* but he liked jazz so he used to have a bit of a column on jazz. But that was a money saving device because *The Independent's* budget has always been strapped for cash as far as I'm aware. I remember they were terrible about paying, I wrote a piece from them once and it took about four months to get paid.

But freelance people who were also on a retainer may have got more?

There may have been that situation. I would think that maybe some of the senior classical guys for instance. I mean some of them had been on the papers for decades. It's likely they weren't still being paid by the piece, it's likely they were on some kind of retainer.

So there were no bonuses, or were you set targets?

No nothing like that. You worked from week to week really. (18m18)

How, if at all, did the *Sunday Times* invest in your personal and professional development, were they sending you on training courses?

Oh nothing, No, no you were completely self-sufficient. You'd be in a position there where if you were writing for them you were already at the top of the tree. That would be the *Sunday Times* position on it. You're writing for the best paper so we don't need to train you any more. If you are already in here then that's reason enough, you're eminence to be established.

So they didn't invest in you at all, I guess if you're freelance it's up to you to keep yourself...

No they didn't even invest in their staffers never mind the freelancers.

So how did you keep yourself up to date with new skills or just your professional development really. Were there conferences, or seminars, or what was available to you if anything?

Nothing. Nothing at all. You were completely self-sufficient. In a sense it was up to you. If you were going to be the *Sunday Times* spokesperson for jazz you had to make sure you were up to speed with everything that was going on, it was up to you to do it to hold on to your position. In the end they were the beneficiary of all that, they got the benefit of your wisdom, which they would then pass on to their readers and charge them money for it. Other than that there would've been absolutely nothing that they would have done to help you.

So lots of self-motivated research and reading things?

Well if you take that position seriously, that's what you have to do, you just have to make sure you're up to speed. So keep ahead of the game? And again that's what I feel so many people don't do.

Were there any barriers to your creativity at the end of the 80s, when you were writing for the *Sunday Times*, whether they be Editorial changes or increased levels of control or bureaucracy, anything like that? I'm wondering if those increased towards the end of the period? I guess some of the people I'm speaking to wrote from 81 to 91 so perhaps in those cases I'll be saying did the barriers increase as the decade progressed. But I wondered with the period that you were writing there whether you saw anything?

Well I don't know if you'd call it barriers, but I think, I mean inevitably as time goes on a culture becomes less freewheeling and certainly from the period of 1981 – 1991, the culture of music became less freewheeling simply because it got older. There's more music available, more bands playing, less new ground to be broken, and in that sense it was more difficult to do new things as a writer as much as a musician, to do new things, to find new things to talk about to approach things in different ways. And in that sense there's a kind of unconscious tightening of the boundaries of you like, simply because the world of possibilities shrinks down, but I don't think that was, and as I said the music industry had become more corporate, the environment was becoming more contained by the industry itself so to that extent yes. But I don't think there was anything within the papers themselves. I don't think there was anyone at the arts desk saying we've got to really keep a tighter grip on this, I don't think there was anything like that at all. (22m58)

You weren't getting quality control forms through the post or increased paperwork?

No nothing like that. No I think if there was a gradual change I think that was a natural consequence of the way everything was moving.

Not that you were an employee but in terms of employer relations if you like, I was going to ask to what extent were you able to shape the Editorial content, but you've said earlier on that you were pretty much free to suggest content, so quite a bit of freedom then?

Yes, although it would be consultative. In a sense you've always got to convince our Editor that what you want to do is a good thing and if you make a good enough case for it and they trust your judgement then you'll probably get to do it. But if there's a seed of doubt in their mind for whatever reason they might say 'well actually that doesn't sound good Richard, have you got anything else?'. (24m15)

How if at all did you ever receive any feedback, on your work?

If they didn't say anything it was OK. Sometimes they'd say 'oh that was a good piece this week' or whatever. There'd be a little thumbs up every so often. But basically if you weren't rocking the boat then everything was fine.

So you were getting some recognition, so Editors were quite...

Well if you had a cordial relationship with people then you'd just make the assumption that you're doing decent work. If they suddenly seem a bit more cold and 'well that doesn't sound very good Richard', you'd think 'oh dear what have I done, maybe they haven't liked the last few pieces. It's not one of those situations where you'd get praise from your employers for something good that you've done, because that rarely happens. Even now I still write reviews for the *BBC Music Magazine*. I do two jazz reviews every issue usually, and they've never said to me 'that was a great review Richard'. Not once, I've had no feedback, so I just assume that everything's fine. No, if you go in to it with that (expectation) then you're going to be disappointed.

Again I guess because you were freelance, you weren't religiously called in once a year for an annual appraisal or anything like that?

No it just doesn't work that way. I mean I know that happens in corporate life but it doesn't happen (Not in this world?) No. I mean you might have an occasional lunch with your Editor and he might say 'you've been in good form lately Richard' or whatever it might be.

Did the Editor, the Arts Editor, ever get all of the writers that contributed to the arts pages, did you ever get together?

No, no never met anyone. I don't think I've never met any of the other arts writers. The only time, I went up to the *Sunday Times* office once and Nigella Lawson was there because she was writing something for them at the time.

So if they were going to revamp the arts page or come up with a new supplement or something they wouldn't get all of the arts contributors in, and say 'look this is what we're thinking of doing, what are your ideas'?

Well they might now, I don't know, it would depend from paper to paper. Some of them might but they never have in my experience. I mean I'm an Editor of my magazine now and I've never called the contributors together. I set the direction thank you very much. I think that tends to come from above, you tend to say to your contributors 'right we're doing this from now on'. No, it's much more a master servant relationship I'm afraid. (28m02)

And what was the most common source of conflict in that professional environment and how were conflicts typically resolved?

There was no conflict really. If you did things they didn't like they'd just stop asking you to write, they'd ease you out somehow, I'd imagine. There are situations where people have been dumped by an overall Editor, a new Editor can come into a paper and if he feels he's got to be a bit of a new broom he might say to the arts desk 'I don't like so and so's writing, get rid of him'. I think that's happened once or twice but even that's rare actually because again if the section is settled and it's going fine there's no reason to rock the boat. That's just going to cause problems and because newspapers have to work to such tight deadlines you don't need problems like that. I think on a monthly magazine it's a bit different because there's more time and space for quiet reflection. But you're churning out stuff when you're on a national newspaper particularly if it's a daily, I mean it wasn't so bad on the *Sunday Times* because that was weekly, you'd have really quite reasonable deadlines, but if you're on a daily, I mean for goodness sake you've got to really turn that out fast. (29m38)

Did you find it very different to working to the *NME*, was there any difference in how quickly they expected you to...

Well no because although the *Sunday Times* was a weekly the *NME* a weekly. I mean the *NME* had fairly tight deadlines but it wasn't anything like it was on a daily newspaper. But even then the arts coverage of a daily newspaper tends to be planned a few days in advance, well sometimes you would have next day reviews, but the film reviews section is only a weekly thing, in a daily newspaper, it's only once a week you see the film reviews. So it tends to be less newsy, the culture pages, because if you review a live concert or something that tends to go in the next day and I've had to turn things around overnight in that environment as well. But for things like books and theatre and film and CD reviews that can be weekly, so you're on less of a tight deadline and there's more room for considered reflection and all that.

As long as they don't send the CD through the day before I guess?

Yes, well that happens too (Does it?) Yes, well I remember I had to write an obituary, when Dean Martin died on Boxing Day one year, and David the arts guy of the *Sunday Times* phoned me up on Boxing Day to ask me to write an obituary for the next paper. I think this was on a Thursday, and I had to write it for the Friday, for Sunday's paper. And as I say he died on Boxing Day, or was it Christmas Day, I forget? No I think it was Boxing Day.

I suppose they can just phone you at the drop of a hat and insist on something at short notice?

Well they have to. It's the job, it's a newspaper we're talking about.

What would happen if you said 'no, actually I'm out doing something and I can't' would they drop you?

Well they would get someone else but it would blot your copy book. I mean you don't want to turn down work, you're a freelance. It's the last thing you want is to turn down work, unless you're some kind of idiot.

Part B

So you started at *The Times* in 1987. Maybe it was 1988, that's the earliest piece you found is it? Maybe stick to 1988, you would know better in that case. I left *The London Daily News* middle of 1987, then I was at *The Independent* for a short time, so yes that makes sense. So you started at *The Times* as a freelance initially? Yes, still am a freelance. But there was a short period when you had a contract? I had a contract briefly, that's outside your period really, that was after 1991. I still had a contract when I was in New York as far as I recall. I wanted to live there so I went over for about seven or eight months, and I was writing for *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

So how did you actually get the job with *The Times*?

It was through Richard Williams needing someone to deputise for him. I was actually supposed to be doing just the listings and an occasional concert, that was the original plan, but after about two or four weeks he was promoted I think to a much more demanding role.

So how did he know about you, did you respond to a job advert?

I had met him at a concert when I was at *The London Daily News* and I was very aware of his work because when I was a sixth former I was reading Richard Williams, I really admired his work. And I was at a concert with the *London Daily News* and I saw a man who I took to be Richard Williams, I don't know why I thought it was him, I hadn't seen a picture, and I struck up a conversation and it was him. So we just met the once. And what happened after that did he contact me or did I contact him? I can't remember, I honestly can't remember what happened, maybe I dropped him a line. But you obviously got on well and struck a chord with each other? Yes, yes.

So a chance meeting. So he didn't then interview you or say 'bring us along a portfolio of your writing'?

No, we had lunch. He told me what he wanted over lunch.

So initially it was just listings and the odd concert review so did they say 'just do the odd one or two and we'll see if it works and take it from there', or were you just kind of on-board from the off? I was just on board. Yes, it sounds weird now looking back.

I used to work as Human Resources Manager and I'm really intrigued by how informal the recruitment process was with music journalists.

I mean that's a problem with journalism generally. The informality is very good, I shouldn't complain, because I got through that way. But that's why journalism is so cliquey because there's no set procedure for entrance into the industry. And it's still the same now? Yes, as far as I know and it's 'who you know'. It's dreadful. I'm interested in blogging and the thing I like about blogging is that it's open to anyone and you have this alternative network of voices. Of course cliques develop but it's much more fluid than journalism. I'm always shocked when I look at national newspapers and scan the bylines, how many sons and daughters of journalists are employed in the business, it's extraordinary, and it's one of the subjects that people don't like discussing for obvious reasons.

I've noticed that, because once I built my database sadly my first job was to find out which of the writers were still alive and of those who were establish whether any contact details existed for them, a web page, a home address or some society that they belong to, and several people had a biography on the internet and I couldn't help noticing how many people studied at Oxford.

Yes, I went to Oxford. I went to St Catherine's at Oxford. I hated Oxford you see, I've never had anything to do with it since. I hated the social networking side. But I'm always amazed how big a role that plays, it's incredible. It does seem to be a common thread that I keep spotting, something is happening there with Oxford I'm sure. It is, it's true. I've never made any use of it. I don't see any of my old friends at all.

I wonder if maybe all the newspaper Editors are all from Oxbridge?

Yes it is, so they assume that there's a particular type of intelligence that goes with being from Oxbridge which I don't think is true at all. But they like to pigeonhole people. So you've got the kind of Oxford network and then the informality, it creates a very, well I'll give you an example; Robert

Sandall, I've known him for as long as I've been at *The Times*, Robert got his first job in journalism through me. I was a very good friend of a woman who knew him and set up a meeting between me and him, and we had a drink and he was looking for work, he wasn't working in journalism at all, and I was on *The London Daily News* at that point and I put him in touch with my Editor and that's how he began. I don't see him very often now, but that's how he began. He knows David Sinclair very well, they're old friends. That's the one thing I hate about journalism, it's so unbelievably clique, it's really unhealthy because it's supposed to be reflecting society, well how can it when you have the same bunch of people with a very narrow background all talking to each other which is what it is. (1h02m30)

I'm discovering this as I go along, I'm quite new to these things.

Well why wouldn't you be, because they never discuss it. I've tried writing articles about it, you mention it to Editors and it always makes you sound as if you're feeling bitter, I'm not bitter about it, it's just that it's a fact. American journalism is based on more professional lines, you have to qualify generally at journalism school, you don't have to but generally speaking people do, and it's more of a craft, and people here look down on American journalism well it's actually a better standard than we have here because it's more thorough, it can be more boring sometimes but it's more thorough. That's why their magazines are better than ours, because people actually work at it, whereas here it's Oxford charm that gets you by.

You mentioned qualifications, so they never actually asked about yours? I mean I think journalism courses are much more prolific now than they were in the 1980s, but there was no specific requirement for particular qualifications? Did you need to be a graduate – in any subject?

No, nothing. I've never used mine, I've never even collected my degree actually. I was in debt at the time I left so I had to pay off my debts.

So no interview? No. No portfolio of work? No. No qualifications necessary? No.

Would you say that was the same for all the genres – the way that people were recruited?

I'm sure with classical there must be more emphasis on graduate qualifications, I'd have thought. I'm not aware of specifics. Actually, I suspect in classical music it probably isn't much stricter than pop journalism actually. It's a question of being able to write and you can write without having a degree in a subject. So it's about being able to write and not necessarily having a music background? Yes. I noticed that people seem more likely to hold an English or literature degree than a music degree. Yes.

In terms of level of pay, was that based on number of words or were you just given a flat rate for a review, a listing or a feature?

Yes, it was a different rate for each piece. It's always incredibly vague in many ways, it still is now. I'll write a piece and not know what I'm going to be paid for it. I mean maybe other people are more assertive about it, but as long as I do things regularly I don't pay too much attention to the detail. Do you know if that's the same for other genres?

No, I honestly don't know. So it's not openly publicised, you don't get a sheet through the post saying 'all music journalists will get X rate for X type of piece'. No because people aren't in unions. I don't think I've ever been a member of the NUJ, maybe briefly. So very much individualistic? Yes.

Did that method of payment change during the period?

No. The contract came later, so it didn't change.

So which type of article paid best?

A feature always paid best, because that's obviously longer.

And would maybe listings get a much lower rate of pay?

I think for a 1000 word article they probably would've paid £200, it's such a long time ago I've forgotten, and listings you would make maybe half of that. The listings section was quite large during those days.

Yes I noticed that listings seem to have expanded during that period.

Well the listings idea took off partly because of *The London Daily News*, because the woman who was in charge of the listings section at *The London Daily News* set up her own company, which became incredibly successful. I think it's the basis of PA Listings now actually. Are listings outsourced to them now? PA Listings provide a lot of the copy. At *The Times* I go through what they've sent and I

pick out highlights and correct them, because they make a lot of mistakes, but it is essentially outsourced, yes.

Somebody else suggested that listings came about because of Q, because that was quite lists based.
Ah, I wouldn't know.

So if you were freelance I'm guessing there were no long terms rewards like pensions or job security?
No.

Did they ever invest in any kind of learning or development or professional development for you? No.
So you had to do all of that yourself? Yes. Was there anything around in the 1980s to help with that such as seminars, conferences, training courses? No, I wasn't aware of anything.

So in terms of keeping yourself up to speed, or developing your writing, what was available to you and what did you use? Was it just a case of reading other people's work?

It was really, because I was covering other areas as well as music. If I was covering one subject, music, all the time I'd have got very bored actually. (1h13m00)

How, if at all, did you ever receive any feedback on the work that you submitted to *The Times*?
From Editors? Yes. Informal chats on the phone. That was before the days of email of course. Yes it was occasional comments on the phone. I wasn't the kind of person to spend lots of time chatting on the phone, and I'd hardly ever go into the office so our contact was minimal. I like it like that to be honest. It's nice having an Editor who's not telling you what to do.

Did they ever call you into the office. I guess being freelance you wouldn't have an annual appraisal, but did they ever once a year say 'just pop in'?

I'd have lunch with my Editor about once a year. It wasn't a set thing, but we'd normally meet about once.

So you had a fairly free hand in choosing the music that you could cover, but did they ever ask for your opinion or your views if they were thinking of changing the arts pages or introducing a new section. Would they ever ask your opinion?

No, I don't think they did. I can't think of an example of that happening.

In the 1980s various new supplements came along and the paper expanded, and I always envisaged all of the arts critics being called in, and someone saying 'we're thinking of changing the format, what do you think, any ideas?', I mean journalists are fairly creative people.

I always had this vision of journalism. The kind of journalism I admired was in the 1960s, New York journalism, incredibly creative, what's called the new journalism, with people like Tom Wolfe. But in those days journalists and Editors would have these brainstorming sessions, but I've never experienced anything like that, I've never heard of it happening. Editors nowadays, or at least since I've been doing it, have always been so overworked they can really only look beyond the next two days. They're just trying to stay on top of this beast that is lumbering along, and it's not really got any better, it's weird it just seems the same. My impression is that they tend to ask marketing people that, which is sad, really sad.

Do you ever have much contact with the marketing people directly?

No, no.

What was the most common source of conflict within that professional environment at that time and how were any conflicts typically resolved?

I can't really say there were conflicts. I was just aware, in jazz anyway, there were just differences of opinion about how jazz should be covered, but those disputes were between me and people who worked on other newspapers and other magazines who had more purist ideas. It didn't involve people at *The Times*. I don't know how much you spoke to Richard Cook but Richard has a particular vision of how people should write about jazz, and it's a very different, he feels that we should be paying much more attention to avant-garde experimental jazz, and my feeling is that avant-garde music has had forty years to establish itself and it hasn't, and that probably tells you something about it, to put it in a nutshell. I tend to think, and probably like Dave Gelly as well, that there's a huge swathe of people who are desperate to hear music that's not pop music that stretches them slightly but that's melodic and reasonably accessible. I'm not saying that it has to be dumbed-down, but it has to be

friendly in a way. The other school takes a view that jazz is no good unless it challenges people all the time. Well I think if you're going to do that you'll end up with a very minority art form, which is what we've got. I guess you must bump into each other at concerts all the time? Not often, no. Not living in London makes a difference. I'll go to a concert, I'll see a couple of critics but I don't usually have long conversations with them. I mean sometimes we'd all go on press trips together but that doesn't happen that often anyway.

Is that something that happened a lot in the 1980s, press trips? I wonder if there were more of them then than there are now?

I think there were more of them then. I think because the major record companies were dipping a toe into jazz at that point and they had more money to spend. I think that's the case. It's hard to say because I don't do as many interviews as I used to. Trips are offered but I don't take them up very often. Not as often as I used to.

I guess if you're offered a trip, are you obliged to write a favourable review?

You are, so you shouldn't go on the trip if the artist doesn't interest you really. I mean some papers, *The Sunday Times*, doesn't allow journalists to accept trips. Has it always been like that? Having said that, they have changed the rule recently. I don't know when that came into force but it's always been enforced as long as I've been writing for them and that's a long time, twelve years. It makes life awkward. [Further comments off the record]. But the last time I was offered a trip there wasn't a problem, much to my surprise. In fact I didn't go on the trip on the end, but it was fine.

So if you do need to go and see somebody would *The Times*, back in 1987/88-91, would they refund all of your expenses?

No, no. So what you would do is you would arrange to do the interview for, *The Times* was fine, but it was *The Sunday Times* and I wasn't working for them anyway, but in my experience you'd arrange to do the trip and you'd also contact a small music magazine and say 'I've got this chance of an interview with X, would you like a piece?', and if they say 'yes' then you go on the trip and supply the small magazine with a small piece but the main piece is for the Sunday paper and that somehow satisfies their conscience, don't mention this, it seems rather ludicrous really. But no, bigger press trips, they haven't come up. There was more money I think in the late-1980s, major record companies thought they'd make a lot of money out of jazz because it seemed fashionable. Was it the same in world music? World music seemed quieter.

Yes world music seemed to come onto the scene and increase during the 1980s, it became a new category as such. How would Editors decide who would cover new genres such as world music - did they phone around all of their freelancers? Although I guess if you were choosing artists to cover yourself it might have been the other way around?

Yes, I would just suggest things. At *The Times*, the pop critics stick to their patch, classical people stick to their patch and there's this huge amorphous area which I tend to cover. They have John Bungey as well now who does more jazz than me at *The Times* really, or does he? No he doesn't, he does a bit less.

There must be a grey area in between pop and jazz?

Yes there is, I like blues a lot, musicals as I say, when I say musicals the big west end musicals tend to be the theatre people's property or territory but I like doing fringe shows and revivals and anything that's slightly off the beaten track. It's all very informal, we've never sat down and said 'I'm going to do this'. It's just a habit that's developed. As I said it's different now though because we have this new Editor and they're now much more Editor driven, the content, not that I have much contact with my new Editor but, and I know David Sinclair's had this experience, if I have a good idea I send them an email and I'm probably not going to hear back from them, they just don't reply, so that means 'no'. If they want something they contact you. Which is not a very satisfactory way of working.

Do you know when that shifted, when that happened?

Well at *The Times*, about a year ago. I don't know about *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* seems to run along the same lines I think. You'd have to ask Robin Denselow, he would know.

If there's any doubt in your mind and you think 'this might be David Sinclair's patch' you would speak to each other?

Yes, it's normally fairly clear which is which though.

That's the end of my questions, but is there anything else that you can think of regarding jazz journalism in *The Times* between 1988-91?

No.

So I'm writing a thesis on changes on music journalism in the broadsheet press 1981-91, have I missed anything at all for *The Times* from that period?

The other thing I've noticed, and I think it falls within that period, is that there was this trend towards multi-section newspapers. And that had a slightly odd effect. It's been good for journalists in some ways because there's more space to fill obviously and when you're freelance you have three phone calls coming in instead of one. I think that applies to that period 1981-91, yes. The one problem is that, especially from a reader's point of view, they'll see an advert for an album and at the bottom of the advert it says 'First class – a masterpiece – *The Times*'. That's happened to me, I've seen things about jazz albums, and 'Brilliant – *The Times*', and I think 'I didn't write about that album, I didn't say that', and I can't figure it out, it wasn't me who said it. And there's so many supplements now that it's much easier for publicists to get a good mention from somewhere on a national newspaper and I think it has devalued the currency because you'll find that this person who said 'it's a masterpiece' in *The Times* was in the Saturday listings section in a tiny box in one corner and it's not the main critic it's someone else. I can see why publicists do it, it makes sense from their point of view but from a readers point of view it makes things even more confusing and that began to develop in that period I would say, and that's a problem across the board now. The book reviews are very similar now.

The other thing I noticed was that most of the music critics seemed to me male, I don't know if that had an impact on what was chosen? Were all your Editors male as well?

Yes except this troublesome one I've got now. No connection! The Reviews Editor is female as well and she's great, she's been in the job, I lose track, I would guess at least six years if not longer. She's Debra Craine, the dance critic at *The Times*, so I probably shouldn't name her. At *The Independent* Fiona Maddocks was commissioning pieces from me in 1987, but I can't think of any female jazz critics, there must be some. No there aren't, I can't think of anyone. Val Wilmer the photographer, but I can't think of any writers.

Arts Editors, did they tend to come from classical backgrounds, or would a jazz or a pop person make it to become the Arts Editor? Did they all tend to come up from the classical genre?

In two cases they did, in my experience of *The Times*. John Higgins was the opera critic, Richard Morrison was the Editor for a long long time, he's now a columnist and he's a classical critic. I can't speak for other papers, I wouldn't have thought on other papers that would be the case. And the Arts Editor now is female now at *The Times* in fact, a female Arts Editor and a female Music Editor. Her predecessor was a female as well come to think of it. [Further comments off the record]

So Editors were mostly male and none that you can think of coming up from pop or jazz, it was mostly from the classical stream?

People didn't have to have a lot of arts experience, I mean it's more a question of production expertise sometimes. When I freelanced for *The Guardian*, between 1984 to 1986 I think, my Arts Editor there, Roger Alton, I'm sure he didn't have an arts background. He's now the Editor of *The Observer*. Of course it helps to have expertise but it's not essential.

If you freelanced for *The Guardian* from 1984-1986 did Wapping have any effect on that?

No. I was still working, my full time job then was at the BBC in the newsroom and I had a very flexible shift pattern system at the BBC and it gave me enough time to work shifts at *The Guardian*. I was doing news shifts and then I'd do arts features as well.

Part B

So you said you were always freelance at *The Guardian*?

Yes, so I occasionally write for other people as well, when I have time. I was BBC staff which was slightly difficult at some stages because the BBC owned me, so if they said go somewhere I had to go somewhere and then at one stage the BBC had its big purge of worrying about people writing the whole time and I had to be hauled in before management to discuss whether or not I could keep writing for *The Guardian* and it was deemed that what I was doing was so different from what I did for the BBC it was absolutely fine; and anyway I do occasional music bits for the BBC as well now which helps them so they've been very civilized about it, but they've always had officially first call and they've always paid me a salary and *The Guardian* always freelance.

And *The Guardian* were quite happy with that situation?

Yes, yes absolutely.

Do you think they'd have tolerated that for a classical or jazz writer?

Well most of their writers were freelance I think, I could be wrong but I think Michael Billington is about the only arts writer on staff, I could be wrong, I don't know. But for a newspaper to have freelancers you don't have to pay them pensions or that sort of stuff, they're not hard to get rid of and all the rest of it. So no, I would think with something like pop music where they were not sure if it was going to last or not last I think a freelance makes a lot of sense as far as they're concerned. But they probably didn't expect me to last as long as I have, neither did I. But that's basically because of the music, because the music's kept being interesting and it kept changing and there's been lots of new things to write about.

Because you were appearing very regularly, did you have something saying you had to do one album review at least a week?

No, with the records they rang up, I can't remember if it was Roger or who it was, it may have been someone before that, Stuart Jeffries, they rang up and said 'we'd like a record review a week' which got a bit panicky if I was about to go off on a foreign trip somewhere with the BBC, I'd have to get advance copies and stock them up a bit. But that's all right, just a bit of juggling.

OK so freelance, but they did have an expectation about volumes?

Yes but they could stop me any time they wanted to, so it was to their advantage not mine.

So how did you actually secure that position with *The Guardian*, was it an advert that you responded to or was it a personal contact?

I did a lot of journalism at Oxford, I was the editor of *Isis*, and I rang them up. I was a bad folk singer at one stage and was playing at the Beaulieu Folk Festival and I rang them up and said 'there's this folk festival' and I was going down to play there, and I rang up and said 'there's this thing going on is anyone reviewing it?' They said 'no', and they said 'who are you', and I said 'I thought I might write you some words' and then they printed them and then I rang up the next week and said 'I can write you some more words' so I interviewed The Watsons I think it was, and they said 'that was all right' and they printed that too, and it's been going ever since. (1h01m24)

So they didn't interview you, you weren't called in for a personal meeting?

No. No.

I used to be a HR Manager and I'm always stunned by how different it was.

It was. It was probably more efficient, it worked.

So there was no submission of a portfolio of the work you'd been doing?

No. I said 'this is what I'm doing'.

And they just read it, liked it and took it?

I think I probably wrote them a piece first from, there was a trip to India, there was an Oxford sort of music and drama thing going over there to India and I wrote a piece on that for them and they printed it on spec.

And this is while you were a student at Oxford?

I was certainly writing for them as I was a student.

Was it English you studied?

English I did, yes. Precocious kid.

Did you get a sense of what qualities or what they were looking for when they were hiring people as freelance writers?

I think they wanted someone who could write, who was reliable, get the stuff in on time and knew what was going on, and would tell them what was going on, and who was younger than them at the time. (1h03m25)

And do you think that applied to all music critics irrespective of whether they were writing about classical or jazz?

No it was quite different. It was a much more sort of young scene at that time, it was just emerging and I suspect they wouldn't have taken a classical critic straight from Oxford, I mean who was a student, unless they were brilliant or something. I thought I could say 'there's this stuff going on and you ought to know about it' and they thought 'help we ought to know about it' and then since then it's become mainstream really.

So I wonder if the classical people would have had to have proved themselves somehow?

I'd have thought so probably, yes. Or probably if you were writing about rock music now in the same way it's much more established you'd have to prove yourself first. I'm sure you couldn't just ring them up and say 'oi, I want to do it'.

Because it was a new thing then, you were there at the cutting edge or the front line, doing it for them?

Yes because there was no-one else much around doing it. I was also doing African politics and politics at the same time. That was my day job. (???)

I noticed that most of the rock and pop writers during this period were male, apart from Mary Harron, why do you think that was and how do you think that might have affected rock and pop coverage particularly in the broadsheets?

There were probably more male musicians, it's a sweeping statement and it's probably wrong, but I think it was perceived as being more of a male preserve during the 1960s and there were a few amazing notable exceptions like Sandy Denny in the folk field and Janis Joplin and people like that I guess. But the majority of performers were certainly male which gradually changed, as Chrissie Hynde or girl bands or whatever came into it, or country stars, and now there's probably equally as many female performers as male performers, and quite right too, so whether that's the reason I don't know. So it's to do with the artists? It's possible. But it's true there weren't, and there are now more female writers as male writers certainly on *The Guardian* you've got lots. There's loads of writers now.

Do you think that maybe because most of the rock and pop writers were male they would've been perhaps drawn towards rock, it's a generalisation, and that maybe pop might have missed out?

Well it depends on the difference between rock and pop. Rock in those days was the polite term for the more serious stuff, the Led Zeppelin's or The Who or the Stones or the Floyd and all these sort people which again are all male bands. Folk music had a few great women singers, the Watsons and Norma Waterson, June Tabor, Sandy Denny, but it was still, if you'd go to a folk club, more of a male preserve than a female preserve. Certainly rock shows were much more male preserves which then gradually changed. Unless you went to see the Bay City Rollers which probably had much younger audiences, I don't know, although the Beatles had lots of screaming girl fans didn't they. I don't know, there should've been more female writers earlier on but they got there eventually anyway. (1h08m02)

In terms of level of pay did *The Guardian* pay according to the number of words?

Yes, and still do.

And so there wasn't a rate for a feature, a rate for a review, a rate for an event guide? It was predominantly by number of words?

Well this is my accounts book. Let's have a look. The 1980s. In the early 1970s it was £6 per review, by 1980 it had gone up to £15 a review. It was a lot of money in those days etc, etc, etc.

So that was by the type of article?

There's a Pretenders interview, 1980, £60 for a feature. Record review, £65.

Was it a flat rate?

When I started doing it at Oxford, it was amazing to get £5 for the odd concert, it transformed your life. (1h10m05)

So was that a standard rate for all of the music writers, irrespective of genre?

I've no idea. But at the time that certainly seemed perfectly reasonable and as a student it was fine. It's a lot more than that now.

So they were paying by number of words but that was also associated with the type of article as well?

That was for reviews, I'm sure all reviewers got that, that was a standard review I suspect. It was all done by words. The usual freelance stuff. But better than some of the specialist magazines pay now.

We've talked about freebies, but did you find that during the 1980s record companies were increasingly offering incentives?

In the 1970s they were, 1970s were extraordinary.

But no increase in the 1980s?

Probably, yes there was lots of money in the 1980s. It's always a tricky thing because if there's a scoop and they're offering you an exclusive on something and the paper can't afford it then it's something you want to do.

And why would the paper object really?

Well they did object, quite rightly they don't want to feel they're being dictated to by the record company or you're being bought in any way. So it's a tricky one. But they wouldn't have necessarily had the money to send you to San Francisco or, it was usually America in those days.

And you said no long term rewards, no pension?

No, I was freelance, no job security, absolutely none, no, no, no.

Did they ever invest in your personal or professional development?

Absolutely not, you're freelance.

Thinking about your relationship with *The Guardian*, although they weren't strictly your employer as such, but thinking of them in that capacity, did they give you opportunities to shape the arts page or, because I noticed that they changed the way that the page looked during those eleven years, would they ever say 'we're thinking of having a bit of change around, we're going to be doing x, y or z from now on, what do you think'?

Yes it's possible, yes. They were all quite friendly.

They did, so they would call you up just for an informal chat?

Well no they'd call you up and say we're going to do this so we might need something. I can't remember to be honest.

I'm trying to think how much involvement they allowed really?

No, I was never involved in what the page looked like particularly, but that's their job, I wouldn't expect to be.

And did they ever call you in along with the other music writers so you were all together in one room to discuss, for example, the future of music coverage in *The Guardian* or something?

Not so much then, no. They do now, they have meetings now which is excellent.

Do you know when they started doing that?

Quite recently, the last four or five years, even less than that maybe. So I mean the jazz writer and the, there's this whole world music/ folk music page thing I write for and we talk to each other and some of the other writers listen to what I'm writing about to make sure we don't clash and we have meetings every month or so just to discuss features and things like that, what's coming up. Which is good. But that's probably because there's more of a group of us now, in those days it was slightly more individual. One took one's copy in, and also because in those days you'd just type things out on a typewriter and take in a piece of paper which would then be copy set and so you'd actually have a personal relationship, you'd phone through from some phone box in the middle of the night but the record reviews and the features you'd take in the piece of paper which sounds extraordinary now and say 'here's my piece of paper' and so you had a much more personal relationship with the Arts Editor that way, so you got to see them once a week or twice a week or whatever and so you'd just sort of have a chat or a coffee or a drink and just talk about things, what's coming up, in a more informal way. But now with the internet age it's much harder to get tied in with the paper, it's easier to lose contact with people I suppose which is why it's very, very nice now that the current editor has these meetings and we can all chat with each other once a week. (1h16m04)

So you had more personal contact with them because you were physically going into the office?

Well on telly you have personal contact all the time because you're in the office and with filming there's a group of you and everyone knows exactly what's going on the whole time and I was doing sort of Newsnight and then Panorama in this period which is a totally different experience because it's much more of a group thing. You've got an entire BBC operation behind you and HR or whatever it is and a massive sort of back up.

And with *The Guardian* you were treated as being out on a limb?

But I mean I've been there quite a long time and as a freelance they're a very nice lot to deal with, they're very friendly, so very good. And mostly they printed what I wrote and seemed to like it so that's the main thing. No-one ever knew if it was going to last, I didn't expect it to last as long as it has done.

Did you ever get any feedback from editors at *The Guardian*, so for example at the BBC and in corporate organisations nowadays you probably have an annual review?

Not really, no. The BBC do indeed have an annual review and all that sort of stuff.

Nothing at *The Guardian*?

No.

Again do you think that's because you were freelance?

Yes, I guess.

So they didn't call you in even though you were freelance, they wouldn't say come in once a year or we'll meet for lunch, for *The Guardian*?

No because I'd see them all the time anyway. Then when they divided up the world music. I've always been battling to get world music to have its own page and have a regular spot which eventually led to the whole, this is a much more recent thing, folk/world/ jazz page, have you seen that? Every Friday, there's a sort of Friday supplement called *Music and Film* and we've got a page on there.

Do you know when that started?

About three years ago I guess.

And that was something that you were able to drive?

Sort of yes, to a certain extent. Well I suggested it and sort of lobbied them a bit and I'm sort of doing less pop music and doing more world music stuff so I now do bits for that rather than mainstream pop so much. (1h19m19)

Did you receive any administrative support from the staff based at *The Guardian*, so booking concert tickets, travel?

No. No. Occasional travel, things like that, but mostly you develop pretty good, it's like all journalism you've got to have good contacts and I think I've got pretty good contacts across the music business now. You get PRs ring you up the whole time, saying 'oi do you want to go and see this' and sending

you records and if you want to go and see things anyway you sort of try and know who the people are to get tickets from.

Do you think that classical writers were getting more administrative support than rock and pop writers?
I've absolutely no idea, you'd have to ask them, I've no idea. I mean, Christmas parties and stuff like that you meet them at, and *The Guardian* have a very good obituaries writers' party every year which is (for) everyone who writes obituaries. Some of my lot are getting a bit ancient now so I write occasional obituaries for people, they have a very good party. So you tend to meet classical writers at events like that. But otherwise particularly these days it's hard to know what the rest of them are doing.

And you said that in terms of them providing you with feedback that it would just be an informal thing when you took work in perhaps?
Yes.

You wouldn't have the editor phoning you up in the 1980s saying...
'The Boomtown Rats were rubbish last night how dare you give them a good review?' No.

They weren't saying 'we really like what you're doing on x, y or z we'll have a bit more of that please'?
Sometimes, yes. There was a record review I did this week and they said 'can you bump it up from 300 to 500'. Which is Bonnie 'Prince' Billy an obscure American which you can read all about in *The Guardian* tomorrow, which got bumped up yesterday by 200 words. But that's more recent and part of them slightly more knowing what's going on. Which is good. (1h22m02)

What was the most common source of conflict within your professional environment during that period, 1981 – 1991?
In what sense?

Either with other writers or with editors? Or with the artists?
Artists I usually got on pretty well with, lots are friends. I'd given John Martyn a bad review once. He slagged me off on stage and then the late Kevin Coyne who was a rather manic pop singer, came up to me and thumped me at one stage on behalf of John Martyn, for giving him a bad review, but mostly they were all right. Silly lot. But lots of them are good friends. I suppose there's a certain amount of competition, one always wants to get the first interview, it's like all journalism, it's slightly competitive, so if you get the first interview with certain people that's always good. Though not as bad as in the old days, there was the London papers, the *Evening Standard* and the *London Evening News*, who both used to have two critics who used to go out and I remember going on a Rolling Stones trip somewhere and they were just following each other around the whole time to see if the other one was getting a secret interview with Keith or Mick that they hadn't got, luckily one didn't have those sort of tabloid pressures which would've been a bit boring.

You must have been bumping into other rock and pop writers as well, from the other broadsheets?
Oh yes, we were quite good friends. They're a jolly lot. Particularly the world music lot that I do a lot on now. They're good friends.

Was there ever any conflict maybe with sub editors changing your copy?
No.

They were quite good at *The Guardian*?
They were very good at *The Guardian* actually yes. I mean there's some horror stories from elsewhere.

Part B

You talked about recruitment at the beginning.

Well it happened that way that time but it happens differently each time. I mean just as I became Music Critic by a series of sort of chances. (2h16m25)

So it was personal connection?

Yes it was personal connection really. That first appointment to the *New Statesman*, I think that John Gross had been advised by Peter Heyworth who'd seen some of my articles in *Music and Musicians* and suggested they might consider me. And I knew Jeremy Noble who was the critic on *The Telegraph* who said 'I'm going back into academic life, I've got a post at Buffalo and I'm a bit fed up with journalism so I'm going to America, so the post will be coming up. Why don't you put in for it and I'll put a word in for you' and that was that, and it was fixed like that. It was just a gentleman's agreement. As I've said it was a very old fashioned paper. I sent them a few bits of my work and the Features Editor looked at them and said 'this looks our sort of stuff, fine, we'll take you on, how would £3,000 a year be?' I came out and found that I was Music Critic for *The Sunday Telegraph* for the next ten years on that basis.

And with *The Independent*, you said that was personal connection where somebody again knew you?

Yes. I mean there was a contract signed by Whittam Smith for my original agreement, sort of three months either way and you know, the sort of usual contractual terms for the retainer. I was never on the staff of any of these papers. I was always retained. To be on the staff you see you are an employee, I'm not an employee, I've always been a freelance in status, tax wise, because they don't have to pay my national insurance stamp. (2h18m09)

So you never responded to a job advertisement or had to take along a portfolio of work?

After six years of teaching I made a vow to myself that I would never again be employed if I could possibly help it. I was thirty then, because I was so fed up with being messed around by stupid college principals and idiot headmasters and I knew I reacted very badly to authority, it brought out the most terrible what not in me you know, sort of brainstorms and furies. I thought 'I'm not wasting my energy on this sort of fruitless fury when I can...', all right I may earn less and indeed if I'd had a wife and family I couldn't have done what I did, but I didn't as it happens and I knew I could always go back to the family home, so I had a back up and you know I never wanted more than a certain amount of money, just enough to be comfortable. I didn't want a career, I just wanted to do something that interested me and hopefully get on with composing my music which eventually I did, and that's how it's worked out. I mean I can walk away from *The Independent* anytime, I always could. I'd give them three months notice and that's that, and I may well do that soon because they obviously have no particular use for my writing and I might take my state pension which would come to much the same.

So nobody ever specified the qualities or qualifications that you needed, in the modern sense of the word?

No.

The Independent, did it have a more equal opportunities ethos, were there more women writers for example? Was it deliberately setting out to be like that?

There certainly were more than on say *The Telegraph*, which was a bit of a gents club.

I've heard this term, a 'boys club', and I wondered, with *The Independent* being new, if it set out to have a different stance or a different approach?

It may have done but I never heard about this. As I say we had a male Editor and a female Music Editor at the start. There were a number, *The Guardian* correspondent, Anna Pavord has been there for years. There were quite a lot of women on the paper. I think editorially at the moment it's an entirely male board now I come to think of it, as far as I know, and it does have a slightly laddish quality to it.

But it wasn't part of a deliberate plan.

Well who knows, I don't know what goes on at board room levels, I've never been involved in any of that.

So recruitment wise, I guess if it was through personal contact, people would just get a phone call and that's how they would get in, they didn't have a list of vacancies or publish them anywhere?

No, no, I was simply rung up. They were building up a team for this very iffy project because nobody knew then whether it would really work or not. I mean if I'd been still been with *The Telegraph* I might have thought twice. But since I was without a job and thinking 'am I going to be able to survive on little bits and pieces?' I mean I was writing little bits for *The Independent* and half a dozen other magazines and oodles of program notes for concerts and things like that, which I still do.

So you said you were on an annual retainer?

Well it was a monthly retainer, it was paid monthly, it still is, and in fact it hasn't been increased a penny since 1996.

Did *The Independent* pay yourself and or other writers by the number of words or by article type?

Well the features would be measured according to the number of words, possibly. Obviously if they ask for a 5000 word feature they are going to pay more for than a 2000 feature because it takes longer to write. The reviews were all standard. I mean most of the papers now, if they wanted a one-off concert review for which you have to come into town, go to the concert, go home, write the review the next morning, would pay £150 for that, *The Independent* pays £120.

So a fixed amount for a review?

I think that's always been the case on every publication.

Was that irrespective of genre? So would you expect a rock and pop person to have got the same?

I can't say, I don't know what they get paid, I'd have thought it's probably the same. I think these days the papers pay as little as possible they can get away with. All their resources go to paying their Editorial Board six figure salaries.

Any long term rewards like pensions? Were they offering you continual training and development or anything like that?

Music criticism in this country is on a much more amateur basis. People who drifted into it were very often not musicians, not necessarily musically trained, although musically informed. They got into it because, they fancied doing it, they knew people and so on, they were engaged on this sort of curious basis. I don't know if there is now, but I've never heard of any sort of academic training for music criticism or anything. No doubt tutors tell people how to write essays on works. Even in America I think there are schools of creative criticism, there's nothing like that here and in a funny way that sort of curious amateurism is both its weakness because it lets in, particularly in the old days when people evaluated everything according to their good taste old boy, you get sort of connoisseurship applied to whatever, you would get a great deal of prejudice perhaps involved in criticism. But on the other hand because there is no critics trades union, I mean there's a Critics Circle but I mean it's toothless, it's not a professionalised body like doctors or performing musicians and so on and so it's not a special interest group or a little closed society in that sense, it's just a rather motley group of individuals who have gone into this rather curious avenue of work because the opportunities are there and because it's something that interests them to do. Which does, or should do, if they were given space enough, guarantee a certain independence of outlook which should be valuable. They're not party liners unless they chose to align themselves to some aesthetic party line. I mean Peter Heyworth was a great one for promoting the Darmstadt avant-garde, Boulez, Stockhausen and people like that. He believed they should be promoted so in a sense he was an advocate for a certain sort of music but that's not the same thing as pushing a party line even so, and his readers knew where he was coming from and would make allowances in reading his reviews. (2h29m09)

Did you ever receive feedback on the quality of your work from your editors?

Well I had those one or two comments from Andreas Whittam Smith. Yes in the early years, yes. Was there any formal structure around it? No, absolutely none. A reader might write in and say 'I thought what you wrote was misleading or libellous or whatever'. Now the standard for that now would be for them to write a letter for the Editor which is printed and to which the person attacked is in effect bound to reply and to defend themselves. Though oddly enough I've never seen this happen in *The*

Independent. *The Independent* doesn't seem to allow for this. I mean for example, *The Guardian* prints a corrections column every day and sometimes those corrections may be factual things in music articles and so on. I don't know why *The Independent* doesn't have that, it should do. But theoretically at any rate, anybody who feels a review is unfair can do that, it's open to them to write a letter to the Editor which may or may not be printed. If it's printed then I would have thought that the critic in question ought to be allowed to reply in print. If it just comes through privately, if it's just passed on, then I would always reply by letter and that's happened possibly a couple of dozen times in my life. Not very often.

But you would never have an Editor say for example, 'we'd like you to come in once every six months and we'll talk about what you were doing?', no feedback?

No, absolutely none at all, absolutely none. The one exception, well to be fair about that, on a very small set up like *Music and Musicians* where the Editor was a friend of mine of course we'd discuss articles and so on and he might have said 'I thought you wrote rather what not' but that would just be a phone conversation. John Gross and Claire Tomlin would occasionally comment, 'I really like that piece'. I do remember I once had from Tony Howard, I had written a review of Schoenberg's essay collection *Style and Idea*, which had come out in a big new version, and I wrote a review of this which the Arts Editor liked so much he made it the book lead. I then had a little note from Tony Howard, the Editor of the *New Statesman* saying he thought this was an awfully good piece, and thank you very much. So that was encouraging. But I never had that on *The Telegraph* or *The Independent*.

I wonder if that contributed to a sense that you were on the periphery of the paper?

Not more than anybody else. In the early days of *The Independent* I would discuss things with Fiona Maddocks and she would comment sometimes on a piece, said that she liked it or 'oh but you missed out' or whatever. But that's about all. No discussions of policy or direction or anything like that, absolutely nothing.

So they didn't get all of their music critics together, in the early days or even later on, to say 'we're a new paper and this is how we want our arts page to look and you are the people who are going to be writing this, what do we all think, lets pool our ideas?'

I can remember Thomas Sutcliffe on *The Independent* decided to have a themed arts page once, the arts in the nuclear age, so we all had to write a piece. That would be about 1989 I think, on the effect of the shadow of the bomb over music since Hiroshima. I think it must have been the 50th anniversary of the dropping of the Hiroshima bomb. That must be 1995.

But that was the exception rather than the rule?

Yes, there were very few of those. I can't off hand think of another one I was involved with. Though I remember the tenth year anniversary of *The Independent*, we were all invited to do a look back piece, changes in the arts over the ten years. So that will be there somewhere and that will be October 1996. It was the 7th October 1986 I think the day it first appeared. (2h34m37)

Did you get any administrative support, in terms of things like if you had to go and review something abroad was there somebody in the office who would arrange your tickets, your travel that sort of thing and then would that apply to all the music critics or were just classical critics getting special treatment?
I think that varies from paper to paper.

At *The Independent*?

No, no. One did it oneself. But one might on *The Telegraph*, one would do it oneself but one would have travel warrants to cover the cost, which you simply handed over at Victoria or whatever and they gave you the ticket and they filed it in and sent it back to the paper you see. It was that sort of system and off you sailed first class, not having to think about it. (2h35m39)

But at *The Independent* nothing?

No, no.

Journalist Interview. Anonymous 5.**Part B**So how did you secure your engagement with the newspaper?

It was quite straight forward. I was hired as a Sub Editor in 1973, I remained a Sub Editor until 1986.

I mean did you apply for the job?

No, I knew they were looking for a Features Sub, and because I knew the Arts Editor because I'd already written for the paper, he said 'you should apply for this' and eventually I was interviewed along with a lot of other people. I pipped Tim Radford to the post actually with that job, he got the next one that came up. But I was appointed a Features Sub Editor, and there was a guy who came in called Andrew Hutton who became Letters Editor, they created a Letters Editor for the first time in 1973, but then Andrew Hutton went and died at the age of about 30, suddenly had a heart attack and died, he was a nice guy actually, the next year, so then that was another job and I think Tim Radford was appointed at that point but not as Letters Editor. Then they decided to not have a Letters Editor but to share it around between the Sub Editors and so on. So I was there and I was promoted to being Deputy Arts Editor and eventually I became Deputy Obituaries Editor and various other things. But my basic position, I was hired as and remained a Sub Editor, and initially I was paid for some of the writing, because that was the deal, so that was a sort of bonus. If we wrote things in our writing day they also paid us as well which was incredibly generous so that was a very desirable thing. But one got expenses, one sometimes got these bonuses of being paid for articles one had written, I don't have all the details of all that, but it just helped to sweeten the pill of not being in a terribly well paid newspaper.

So for the extra writing that you did there was an extra payment on top?

Initially, but later it wasn't. I mean later they decided that my position was that of course I wasn't going to get paid, if you see what I mean.

I just wondered if they paid by number of words?

Well they did pay by the number of words, and they do now, but there was always a rate, I think there was a reviewing rate. But I don't think I got paid that anyway, I think I only got paid that for features and they would be paid by the number of words, or the length, it was paid by the inch, the column inch in those days. But I think that in fact, I don't really remember all those details to be honest, because I was basically salaried and that was the security that I had and that was the best thing about it. I mean the payment of expenses was valuable to me, but these other payments, I think they just, I think they were there initially when I was working there and then I think it tailed off or stopped at a particular point, and one sort of accepted it because one had so much freedom as Deputy Arts Editor, I had a lot of freedom about what I went to do.

And do you think that music journalists received similar remuneration irrespective of genre?

Well I think that reviews were paid as reviews, and I think that was how it was done, but *The Guardian* was rather badly paid. I mean the reviewers were not very well paid compared to *The Financial Times* and *The Times* but then it's all a question of how many people you have on staff. I mean the whole point really was that Hugo Cole was not on staff but he had a contract, he had a retainer and I think that his retainer paid for a whole range of reviews that he would do. I think Bill Bowen was paid as a freelance. I think that our roster of critics that we had, up north Gerald Lerner was on staff as Music Critic. I think there were a whole range of people who were on staff as critics. We used to have staff critics but in the course of the 1980s the number of staff critics went into serious decline and I think you'll find that now there are practically no critics anywhere in Fleet Street who are on staff. The change of course has been one of the things that has made criticism much more vulnerable because if you aren't employing somebody on staff you don't mind how much you use them because they only do what you pay for. So if you want it they'll pay for it and of course it's cheaper. Having staff critics means that you've got them on stand by, it's like having a company of actors, so it's obviously more expensive but it produces better results because they take a serious interest in the overall spread. They feed into the ideas of the arts page, they feed into the Editor. They're not just out pitching for a chance to earn money, they are exercising a responsibility. That's a crucial difference and of course one of the things that has led to the decline in music reviewing and coverage in this way is the fact that Ted Greenfield when he retired in 1993 as Music Critic was replaced by Andrew Clements not as a staff

member, Andrew Clements was not on staff. He had a generous contract but he was not on staff, and that meant that he could be ousted, and he has been, this year, he's been ousted at the age of 55 and replaced by somebody of 30. So there's a huge difference. And also if you're not on staff, Andrew was a very lazy critic in fact and regarded by many people as terribly lazy and very self-serving. But you can't in a way blame him because he wasn't on staff, and it wasn't his responsibility to be *The Guardian's* person thinking about every aspect of what we should be doing in terms of classical music or indeed all music. So now they call him the Senior Classical Music Critic, or *The Guardian's* Classical Musical Critic is what Tom Service is. Whereas Cardus was *The Guardian's* Music Critic. So there's this idea that classical music is somehow different. And so for each of these things you have a specialist, but is it really a realistic way of looking at it? Because if you have a Classical Music Critic and a Rock Critic and so on, the Rock Critic really doesn't understand issues like 'does rock music matter?', or 'what music is more important?' or 'which of the rock music that you're listening to really does matter?'. When Bill Mann, as *Times* Music Critic, said that The Beatles were more important than Schubert, or were as important as Schubert, or John Lennon said that The Beatles were as important as Christ, it was all sort of part of a way of responding to questions of value. Now if you don't have a Music Critic who is taking this sort of responsibility you don't have anybody taking it and so you don't try, and the paper has no view about whether in fact The Beatles are as important as Schubert or not, or what the value of what some rock musician is doing is in comparison, making millions of pounds but perhaps producing crap. So we've moved into an era where success and financial achievement, wealth, are much more important than quality and meaning. (36m25)

So by reducing the number of people on the headcount it was cutting costs.

It cuts costs but then it means that you say that you can be more effective because you can then hire the specialist, but then the specialist doesn't have the perspective. *The Independent* for example has never had critics who travelled, so it had a critic in Edinburgh, a critic in Cardiff, a critic all over who would write locally, but the result of that, of local stringers, is that none of these people have seen the full range so they have no chance of expressing a view which takes into account differences of standard between one part of the country and another. So they are serving those local readers very ill because they are too close to the thing to be able to see the wood for the trees. So these are very, very important distinctions in terms of the perception of what's really happening and in a sense when I was on *The Evening Standard* and I was writing about everything that happened operatically, I was the only person writing and it was my voice for nearly six years, or five and three quarter years, and everybody who read me knew that I was seeing everything. So what I wrote about, every kind of operatic experience within the Greater London area and Glyndebourne and Garsington and Grange Park and whatever it might be, could be counted on as an opera critic because I had a perspective. I also travelled abroad and I had seen an awful lot over a long period of time. Whereas my successor Fiona Maddocks had children which meant that she didn't want to travel at all, she hasn't seen anything, she doesn't get to see very much, she doesn't know what she's talking about half the time, I like her very much, but I mean I think she writes very soft-edged criticism because she doesn't have the experience or the confidence to actually be sharp, except when she is expressing opinion, her opinion. Where does one's objectivity come from? Well it's fed by a range of experience and the same is true of others. (38m23)

Did the broadsheets offer you any long term rewards?

Yes a pension, I had a job at *The Guardian* and admittedly I invested my pension in Equitable Life which wasn't a good idea but nevertheless I have a pension which pays me now a very modest amount, between £9-10,000 a year which does help. From the Guardian? From *The Guardian* after 23 years of work and hopefully it may pay me more if we ever get this problem with Equitable Life sorted out. I was able to acquire the skills without being the critic but because I was on staff I was able to have experience and acquire skills in terms of both writing and in terms of what I knew about opera which it would not otherwise have been so easy for me to do because they paid expenses. Admittedly when I first went to Bayreuth the expenses you will see in the book were only £4, that was in 1972 which wouldn't go very far even then. But nevertheless having expenses was a huge help, and also of course it gave me a position, it gave me respect, a certain amount of authority, you know people will take seriously what's published in a newspaper, whereas when it's published in *Opera Now* or *Music and Musicians* it doesn't really matter. But I've been through these processes of being an Editor of a magazine and up in *The Guardian*. So in one's professional life you go through all sorts of different experiences and you get to work in these formats and you understand what's implied so you put up with it.

And so you said there were three people who were staff?

It's difficult to say. Throughout the 1980s, there was a northern Music Critic, that was Gerald Lerner, there was Ted Greenfield. Then there were people with contracts. Philip Hope-Wallace was on staff in the 1970s until he died, and because he was on staff they had to keep him going, despite all the problems and they found ways of using him and that what used to happen.

And so staff were mostly drawn from the classical genre?

Absolutely, well they were entirely drawn from the classical genre. Robin Denselow was a freelance, John Fordham was a freelance, Ron Atkins was a freelance and so were most of the stringers down in Exeter and wherever they may have been, in the west country. Allan Sadler used to write endless reviews of theatre in the west country, and there were lots of freelancers up in the north. Gerald will fill you in on whether anybody else was on staff up north, I don't think they were but they might have been. David Fallows and David Fanning were both writing reviews at that time up in the north, and David Fanning worked for Manchester, was a lecturer at the University as was David Fallows, they were both university lecturers and they're both Professors I think now. But anyway, the fact is that they were writing for *The Guardian* regularly. Fanning might have had a contract of some sort. Now as far as *The Guardian* in the south was concerned, Meirion Bowen never had a contract but was always a freelance, but Hugo Cole definitely had a contract. When Hugo Cole gave up I think that was the point when much to my detriment Richard Gott, because I was on staff, but Richard Gott decided to offer the money and the contract that Hugo Cole had exercised to Hugh Canning which meant that I had Hugh breathing down my back the whole time for the next three years which was very disadvantageous for me in terms of my professional standing at *The Guardian*. But I can't be sure what those arrangements were you'd need to go and check with somebody at the paper. (42m12)

So no rock and pop people on contracts?

No rock people on contracts at all.

And people on contracts were classical writers who had been there for some time and then at the end of the 1980s there was this shift towards not having staff writers?

Well a) they were getting rid of staff writers so that everybody was at the same level and then they began to bring in more contract writers, about rock and pop and so on and so forth. There was a shift towards more contract writers. Because you could always say we'll take 60 reviews from you a year or we'll take 100 reviews. A hundred reviews at *The Guardian* would now be worth something like £12,000 a year which is a useful sum to know that is coming in, and it doesn't commit you. When I was at *The Standard* I was supposed to write six reviews a month and I was supposed to do all their listings and everything and I made a basic salary of something like £22,000 or £23/24,000 thousand, it wasn't a huge amount, it was about half what I'd been paid on *The Guardian*. But I also then I had the opportunity to make more money from other things that I was doing at *The Standard*, I would write extra reviews, I would be paid expenses. For example in the summer months I might often write twelve reviews a month. But over the whole year it only produced, I mean I was paid £150 or £200 per review extra because that was the nature one of the contract that had been offered to Auberon Waugh when he was in this job before I took it over from him. I mean I'd never been paid expenses for having a meal at The Glyndebourne or somewhere because they were very expensive meals. But *The Standard* expected you would pay for those in those days anyway. (44m34)

So professional development, you've said that it gave you opportunities, experience, writing skills, it opened books for you basically.

Yes, and that led to my book. I give full credit to Peter Preston for allowing me to do that and if you read the preface you'll see. (44m33)

Did you ever receive any editorial feedback on your work and did that change during this period?

I did receive some editorial feedback but I mean the truth really was that I'd had insufficient editorial feedback in the early 1980s perhaps and in the late 1980s when it came I was not very well disposed to receive it, and therefore perhaps that presented further problems with my development as a critic. And in fact I think that there wasn't sufficiently clear, *The Guardian* tended to be rather casual, it relied on people to develop themselves, it didn't really help you develop. I think that's probably still the case, except that the market is much more bland and therefore everybody can see the kind of thing you have to do. When we were rather an individualistic paper in the 1970s and 1980s, it would have been helpful in view of how things were mapped out, I would have liked to have perhaps been sympathetically encouraged to change a bit more, because when I went to *The Standard* I had to change and I made myself change and I was perfectly capable of changing but it was very depressing

being a critic who appeared to feel the whole thing was being squeezed more and there was no sympathy for one's expertise and all of that sort of thing. What should've been done was that somebody should've seen what was going on and said 'yes it's very useful this expertise but in order for it to be able to be applied by us you do need to', and you know, I could have done that if I had been editing and in fact I did talk to various writers as an Editor about things but of course I also needed it also to be applied to me and it never was really in a useful way, and I was resistant to it, because again, for human reasons. *The Guardian* was always very bad at handling people or developing talents in my opinion. Obviously the sort of talents they were good at developing was if they decided somebody was a star, and in my case for various reasons they didn't decide I was a star, and Alan Rusbridger subsequently was very friendly with a guy called Ed Pearce who was a Political Correspondent who was terribly critical of what I was saying a lot of the time, so that I began to find that sometimes towards the end of the 1980s, that he would review something that I'd reviewed but in a totally different way in the same magazine and so that was a way of undermining what I'd been doing and that was because Alan Rusbridger I think didn't like what I did, partly because I introduced Alan Rusbridger to the newspaper in 1977, when he was working for the *Cambridge Evening News*. I gave him his first chances to figure in *The Guardian* and I think that in a strange way when he went to *The Guardian*, which he did shortly, and then left for other things, I mean he had a totally different career and did what he did, became this very famous Editor and all that, but the fact is that maybe there was a degree of resentment of the person who'd been the door keeper when he arrived, I don't know, maybe he just honestly didn't like what I did, because we have to face the fact that we're not going to be popular with everybody. Nobody is popular with everybody I think.

So yes I could have been better helped to mould myself for the purposes of what was really going to be required and I could have been handled in a more sympathetic way so that I didn't resent as it were the corrections, that there were indications of later. I mean Helen Oldfield, very nice girl actually, nice woman, she said that she had wanted to resolve my position and make me Opera Critic and sort things out but somehow I hadn't responded well when she raised various issues. But I'd been on the paper for a long time at that point, for fifteen or sixteen years and I was insecure and people who are insecure are always less receptive to correction. So the insecurities needed to be dealt with before I could actually respond well to the encouragement. It's not that I didn't get encouragement, I got encouragement at different stages, I mean Gott was very encouraging, the Features Editor before Roger Alton took over as Features Editor, whoever it was, I've forgotten the exact process, but I think that I was in a sense a potential problem that needed to be handled somewhat differently and in the end I got away and I produced my book and I got my job on *The Standard*. It's very difficult for anybody who is long term in a specialist field if they don't go into the market and get revalued and because I was on *The Guardian* for twenty three years as a specialist in opera and music, far too long, people didn't know if I was worth it. People in the paper hadn't the foggiest because they didn't know if I was any good and I'd never been valued by being out the market place and being employed by somebody else. I did write for *Vogue*, they knew that, I wrote for *Vogue* between 1975 and 1987 and we could've talked all about *Vogue* and music journalism but those were only occasional pieces, there were sixteen issues of *Vogue*, and I wrote a column on music in almost every single issue between 1980 and 1987. (50m08)

I always had visions that if they redesigned the arts page that they would contact all their music writers and say 'we're thinking of doing this and changing things around, what do you all think?'

We did have Editorial conferences every week and we discussed what was being covered, and to some extent how it was being covered, but there wasn't a friendly atmosphere where people could exchange views about how things should be done and whether it was right to approach things in a particular way. It wasn't a university of journalism at all. There were a lot of prickly personalities wanting to grab as much space as they could, and justify the application of freedom of space to their area, to their specialisation because that was the name of the game. The more space you could get the better you'd be doing and the more you'd earn.

It's not how I imagined things at all. It's such a shame because writers are such creative people. They were not regarded as writers they were regarded as journalists, in fact there was a story that writing was the one thing they didn't want, 'fucking writing' they would say, 'art, urgh', as opposed to proper journalism, which is something different. They were not sympathetic to the idea of the writer as creative at all, well on the whole not. Because journalism was always based on this illusion that that there was the facts, facts are sacred and opinions are what you think. So there was this deep unease, although in fact there's been a period when opinion has become the only thing in newspapers in a way because nobody can tell what the facts are any more and facts are better purveyed by television. It's a

slow process working out what the truth is if we're talking about facts. In fact newspapers have become full of opinion, they're all opinion really now. When I was on *The Guardian* there was this sense that opinions were rather suspicious that C.P. Scott was in favour of telling the truth, the facts could be ascertained. But of course in the arts and culture there aren't so many facts, it is mostly opinion, but it was a period when opinion wasn't much appreciated because opinion didn't seem to be associated, as it now is, with success or making money. Big Brother, I mean that's the world we live in now, a different world. (52m44)

I'm just interested in whether or not journalists from different genres received the same level of administrative support from the centre?

Well there was a secretary. There was very little support for the responsible critics, they all did their own work really their own secretarial work. In the music area, Ted Greenfield as Chief Music Critic would hire other people or encourage other people to come on, and he encouraged lots of people to come on, some of whom I didn't approve of at all, so there was a certain amount of tension between Ted, up until 1977 when I was Deputy Arts Editor, and he was rather opposed to me and also because I was writing about opera. Then for his last six years, and once I no longer had power, he was quite supportive. He's quite a nice man, a very nice man in fact. I just felt that some of the people he brought on were people who had the same sorts of opinions that he had and in my opinion he's not in any sense an intellectual music critic although he's not a stupid man, he's quite clever, he got a first at Cambridge and so on, or at least I think he did. But the fact is that I didn't really have much respect for his judgements about music because he wasn't a musician primarily, he had started out as a lobby correspondent and wrote about records. His opinions tended to be very safe and secure and middle of the road really about artists about performers, he always accepted the givens, Karajan was the greatest conductor, Reggie Goodall was not so interesting, everything that was already established. So I was suspicious of some of the people that he supported because they seemed to me to be coming from that background, and actually a lot of them weren't, but that's where they felt like they were coming from. Ed Seckerson he gave chances to, Michael White, Michael John White as we called him, I don't think Michael White is a very sensible person but nevertheless there we are. I mean it's a difficult question, these were the next generation, maybe because I was where I was and I wanted to preserve my position or at least the potential of my position at *The Guardian*, it was a very difficult business being a critic and making oneself a critic in a paper where one was just a Sub Editor so I was in a very exposed position. I needed a patron and I'd had a patron during my first ten years until 1983 and it went on really until Roger Alton came in and then I increasingly didn't have a patron. Richard Gott was a patron for a time but then he was ousted from a features editorship and it was handed over to Alan Rusbridger after Richard Gott, that was the whole point. So Alan Rusbridger was definitely an anti-patron for me, once he took over from Gott, Rusbridger was making things harder for me and that went on until I left in 1986, so it was a difficult period despite the huge amount of writing that I'd done.

It sounds like a huge amount of change and that journalists weren't necessarily involved?

I was very depressed and miserable, it was a horrible period and it was a horrible period in my life in many ways but we got through it. It was very difficult I can remember being very distressed about certain things. It sounds like quite a disruptive time. It was horrible. (56m20)

Part B

So you were appointed Chief Music Critic, 1972/1973, was that on a freelance basis?

I started writing for the paper freelance, in 1972/ 1973. I joined the staff of the newspaper in 1979, during the period when it was off the street. I joined in the summer of 1979 when Joan Chissell retired. There had always been three staff critics, so it had been Bill Mann, Stanley Sadie, Joan Chissell and it became Bill Mann, Stanley Sadie and me, that was in 1979. Then very shortly after that Stanley Sadie left to deal with Grove full time and they didn't replace Stanley on the staff and then Bill Mann retired and I became the Chief Critic in I think it was April of 1982, April or May of 1982, because I was the only remaining person on the staff, the other two had gone.

Did you say earlier that you were invited on board? (50m20)

The person who got me writing for *The Times* in the first place was Stanley Sadie. I had been working with Stanley at the Grove office and at that stage I was doing odd things for *The Financial Times* and Stanley said 'why don't you do things for *The Times*?' So I started doing things for *The Times* and it just gradually increased.

So there was no job advert or interview?

No, there was no job advert. That was very casual then, there was no security, and then I got *The Times* job replacing Joan Chissell. (51m17)

Would you know how other critics from other genres were being selected?

No.

As a freelance I'm guessing that level of pay was determined by number of words?

No, by the piece.

And then once you moved over to staff you had an open ended salary? (52m03)

Yes.

And I guess as a member of staff you had all of the full staff benefits, so a pension that kind of thing?

Yes.

Did *The Times* ever invest in your personal or professional development, were they sending you off on training courses or anything like that?

No.

What level of administrative support did you receive from *The Times*, booking concert tickets, travel, things like that?

The Arts Editor had a secretary and it was her job to get tickets, she got the tickets. There were two or three in my time and they were always perfectly efficient. There were no problems there. The travel department at *The Times* actually worked very well in the 1980s and that arranged things. Quite often when I was travelling for the paper it would be invited by the (unheard) person and they sorted out the travel and paid for things, and other times if I was going to see something important in Paris then the paper sorted that out. (53m47)

Did you receive any feedback on your work from your editors at *The Times* during that time?

From John Higgins, yes.

And then it stopped when he departed?

Yes.

Was that formal, or just casual comments, or was there a formal quarterly process?

Oh, no, no, no. He would just ring up if there was something he liked or something he didn't like.

Just one more question. What was the most common source of conflict within your working environment between 1981 - 1991 and how were conflicts typically resolved. (54m50)

I think it would be fair to say that John had a view that criticism should be, as far as possible, objective and if he detected personal views coming in, whether they were positive or negative, he had a lower threshold there than I did. My writing was probably more personal than he would have liked and that was where the conflict arose. We had a very good working relationship and you are making me look back on that and I feel very fondly about John Higgins because he was involved and he cared and I've never worked with anybody since, well that's not quite true, but only very, very rarely have I worked with anybody since who has cared. It's much, much better to have somebody from *The Times* who will ring you up early in the morning and say 'this just won't do', than to have nothing, and maybe that's part of the decline that no longer is there anybody at editorial level who cares what people are writing. (56m57)

So was it if you offered a value judgement in a piece?

No, as I said, it was if it was personal, if he thought that the view was too personal, that it came out of you, rather than out of this sort of anonymous void. *The Times*, until quite shortly before I started writing for it, had anonymous reviews, reviews were not attributed. That probably went back to John's time, I can't be absolutely sure of that, but his feeling was probably a hangover from that. (58m15)

Part B

So we've done career history, you said a contract at *The Times* and then a contract at *The Observer*?

Yes, so the important thing is that, as far as I know, when I joined *The Times* there were two or three staff music critics but when Stanley Sadie retired they did not want to put a new person on the staff. So they basically offered me a freelance contract for a significant number of pieces a year and it was absolutely bloody vast, it was something like 250 pieces a year, reviews and articles, don't quote me on 250 because I can't remember what the figure was now, but that was one of my main sources of income so it had to be fairly substantial and of course there was the very interesting issue with the Inland Revenue as to if you were doing that much were you actually an employee or not? But as long as you didn't have a dedicated desk in the office and you worked in your own time they were happy with the concept that that was freelance. But there were some newspaper Editors who were working in the building as freelancers from nine to five and that eventually got stamped on. But as far as I was concerned I had a contract with *The Times* to write this number of pieces, an arrangement with *The Listener* to do a day a week as their Music Editor and then the following year a contract with OUP to edit *Early Music*. So basically I had those three contracts but I was completely free to do them whenever I wanted as it were so that was quite a boom time really because I could just put in loads of stuff around all that. So when I moved to *The Observer* I wanted to keep that situation. I can't remember whether they offered me an employee job or not, but it didn't really arise because the advantages of being self-employed then were really quite considerable from the tax point of view so that was what I did, I just moved to an equivalent arrangement with *The Observer* with an understanding that I would write X pieces per year. Of course you were writing far less for *The Observer* because you were writing 1200 words once a week rather than... But I wrote record reviews and features as well so it all added up. So annual freelance contracts? Yes.

So how did I secure the roles? Well in both cases I was approached by the Arts Editor and asked if I was interested in coming and working for them, that was how it worked. Had they seen your writing somewhere else? Yes, I'm sure that's entirely how it happened. And when I went to New York it was well known that I wasn't going to stay in New York, we had young children at that point and so it was known that I was coming back. So I think when *The Times* was having a little turn around in people I was one of the obvious people for them to ask. Then *The Observer* asked at that point, the attraction obviously of moving to *The Observer* from *The Times* was fewer deadlines and having to write less often, so that worked very well. Then I was also approached by *The Independent on Sunday*, not when it started but shortly after, to be their Music Critic, but I turned that down because there wasn't any advantage to that over *The Observer*. So I think Arts Editors looked around, I mean an Arts Editor came to see me the other day to ask about who the bright young music writers were. That's how you get known, by doing jobs writing in papers and being read, you know. (47m46)

So it was somebody who had seen your writing not necessarily someone you knew from a past life?

No, no, not through personal contact, no not really, no. I suppose personal contact was how I originally got bits of freelance writing. But then it's like all these things, if you do it reasonably well you get asked again and then it sort of takes off. So I would say, I mean it's very difficult to generalise about qualities, qualifications and experience because I think what you needed, but I'm almost talking about me looking for people, were people who were absolutely reliable in terms of delivery, deadlines, accuracy and general competence. Of course you needed people who knew a lot about music who had a breadth of interest and you needed people who had enthusiasm and could put that across in their writing. But various people I knew who tried to start to be music critics they were just too chaotic, and once you don't deliver something right or you deliver twice too many words or it's riddled with errors of one sort or another, that just won't do. There is a very good preface by Andrew Porter to his original book of *New Yorker* articles which is called *Music of Three Seasons*, and in that he has a preface which is all about what you need to be a music critic, so that would be the perspective of him going back to the 1950s and 1960s. I would say probably, by the time I started, you needed to be more of a professional journalist. (50m04)

So they wouldn't say 'have a trial period and see how you get on?' they'd already worked you out from afar?

Yes, I think that's the case, yes.

And do you think that applied to all genres, or do you think it differed for rock and pop or jazz?

I think Arts Editors were more at sea with rock and pop because they didn't know so much about it themselves. So I think they would probably tend to trust their writers maybe even more. I don't know how they chose them. There was a chap called Derek Jewell on *The Sunday Times*, he was great.

So they weren't necessarily looking for a music degree?

No, well if they'd looked at me for a music degree they wouldn't have found one. I think it was almost better that you were not part of the music profession you know. (51m05)

Level of pay. What I had from each of them was an annual fee paid monthly, based on an assumption of a number of articles a year, so 250 pieces at 50 pounds a piece, how much would that have been? So if you ended up writing more than the assumed figure would you get paid more money? Well yes, that was a grey area really. Because I think looking back on it I never asked them to pay me more if I'd written more because then if I'd written less I didn't want to give any money back.

Did music journalists receive similar remuneration packages irrespective of qualifications or genre?

Well the answer is I don't know about genre, certainly qualifications had nothing to do with it. I think it was basically just output. I think there was a general move at this time away from staff positions to freelance contracts because newspapers had taken on a huge weight of pensions, holidays, all that sort of stuff which they really didn't want to be burdened with. (52m32)

Did broadsheets offer you any long term rewards, like pensions?

No, no, absolutely nothing. No job security? Oh I see what you mean, no, no. Although I felt as a freelance, that having an annual contract with all these people was a form of security. But certainly nothing long term. But I was quite a successful freelance in my area so I was earning from different places and I suppose I was buying my own pension at that point. So they weren't trying to tie you in for 20 years? No.

Did they invest in any kind of professional development for you?

No, no, absolutely nothing, no. Looking back on it I would say not at all.

How did you receive feedback on the quality of your work?

Very little really, amazingly little really.

So did your Editor ever phone you up and say 'we love what you're doing at the moment, we'd like more of that'?

John Higgins on *The Times* was a very sort of imperious Editor and he'd occasionally say 'I didn't think that worked very well did it' using my efforts to make some joke about something, or he'd say 'right on the nail', that would usually be something he'd been to and agreed with you about. But it wasn't what one could call real feedback. The Editor of *The Observer* once said to me 'I love your openings' because I think he'd never read past the first sentence of anything I'd written. So you certainly didn't expect feedback from ultimate Editors, you got a bit of feedback from Arts Editors and that was about it. But no, that was the usual thing in those days, if people didn't like what you were doing you soon got to know about it because they didn't ask you to do more, there wasn't a sense of feedback being really important.

And it wasn't a scheduled thing, so you wouldn't have lunch with the Editor once a year? Nothing formal?

Oh no, nothing like that. No, nothing formal at all.

Although I guess you must have had letters from readers from time to time?

Yes, letters from readers, some of which were quite interesting. Sometimes disagreeing, but it wasn't usually disagreeing because not enough readers had actually been to the things. It was mostly just expressing an opinion about something or asking a question about something. (55m37)

I'm interested in to what extent you were able to shape the publications. So perhaps if they were changing the arts page, would they ever contact you?

No, I would say they wouldn't have regarded that as our business. Our business was really basically to fill the space that was allocated. I would say my major input was in suggesting feature articles and subjects for interviews and so on that I felt were important, and quite often they would take up those ideas and sometimes they wouldn't for one reason or another. But I think that's another big, big problem that people have today which is total editorial ignorance of who's important and who isn't. So how do they choose who to interview or not? But if I suggested something to John Higgins or to John Lucas they would have a reaction, they would say 'I don't think that's very interesting' or 'he can't talk to save his life', and sometimes they would suggest things to us. But I wouldn't say in terms of shaping the actual publication, no, I wouldn't say that.

The most common source of conflict was undoubtedly critics not liking to be edited, at all. Because I was an Editor as well, I was always a firm believer that you ought to be able to edit stuff and that when you wrote it, it wasn't always as clear as you felt it was. But I think some critics are enormously sensitive about every word and comma, I never was quite that perfectionist. So I quite liked it if a Sub-Editor improved a turn of phrase or something like that. But I think what you want is, which is very difficult to achieve on an overnight, is editing with consultation. You want to be able to see what somebody's done to your piece and then say 'yes' or 'no', which is virtually impossible to do overnight. Whereas for *The Observer* you took it in on Friday morning, they would look at it and have four or five queries to ask you about, and that would often improve it. But I would say in terms of relationships between critics and the papers that was the most turbulent area.

And how would that be resolved, typically?

Oh usually a shouting match of some kind or other, probably the critics usually won, depending on how firm the Editor was. I don't know, it's difficult to remember that really. On *The Listener* when I tried to edit people and they objected I usually just backed off or there would be a compromise of some kind. And also stuff being cut without warning, that of course is the other thing which as I say on *The Times* was pretty well organised, but for instance when the regular Sub went on holiday and there was someone who wasn't a specialist doing it, things used to happen which would cause great offence. You remember I said I used to put a little bit of background in rather than just writing about the performance? Well I once had a review in *The Times* cut, and it wasn't even cut in half, it was cut rather carefully so as to exclude every mention of the performance so all that was left was a little essay about Tallis. It was really bizarre, but happily an unusual incident. (59m46)

I'm wondering, if classical people were at the top of the tree, were they getting more support - perhaps in terms of people in the office helping with arranging trips etc?

Yes, but I would have thought that was pretty common for everybody. If the newspaper sent you abroad, the newspaper would always get your tickets and send them to you, the newspaper would do your travel and I would have thought that applied to anybody who was writing for the page. The poor girl, there was only one person as I remember at *The Times*, would always feel that it was her job to service all the needs of the people who were writing that day or week. Irrespective of genre? You don't think it was just for classical people? Irrespective of genre, again I may be remembering that wrong, but I don't think there would be any discrimination on that. (1h00m51)

Part B

If I could just quickly ask about employment. So you said that you came on board at *The Independent* and you were able to pick and choose who wrote for the publication. How were they recruited – were they people that you'd read in other publications and you thought their style would fit?

Yes, I approached them.

There was no big advert placed or anything like that?

No, no, because they were all on contract as far as I can remember, I'm not sure about Bayan Northcott, I think he was on a contract, you might want to check with him, but I think he was on a contract to write so many pieces a year and the other people were probably paid piecemeal, by the article. (55m)

Did the selection criteria differ according to different genre specialisms? So were you recruiting rock and pop or jazz writers in a different way to how you might have recruited a classical writer?

No. There were two pop writers I think, Dave Hill and Andy Gill, and I think that the fact that there were two, who got quite a lot of space, that was a new thing to give that much space to rock and pop. I remember Bayan would say 'we seem to be giving so much space to rock'. But it's nothing to what's happened since.

Why did they decide to do that?

Because it was a young newspaper with a young team of people who wanted to read about it and that was absolutely right. But they also took it quite seriously. They considered rock and pop to be as worth having, I don't want to use the word intellectual but I can't find another at the moment, a good argument about; as worthy as taking seriously as classical music. There was a sort of a world of debate within rock and pop which maybe hadn't really been aired particularly but they got two writers who were capable of engaging with the issues rather than just saying 'ah great, new whatever from...'. So they were also writing to a higher level. I'm sure it's the same as good sports writers who are actually good writers.

So it wasn't just classical that was reflecting the aims of the paper it was rock and pop and jazz?

Jazz didn't get a lot of coverage, I think I looked after jazz, and there wasn't that much coverage. (57m24)

Did *The Independent* offer any training for the music critics, at the start were they all pulled into a room together?

I don't think so. I think there was a strong tradition of trusting the writer, which I would say has changed. If the writer wanted to concentrate on talking about the second movement of some symphony, within reason you'd go with it. I think once or twice I remember somebody remarking about one particular writer, 'oh they always start 'On Tuesday at The Wigmore Hall''.

A formula?

Yes a formula, but that was just a habit. But there was a strong wish to let each writer have their tone of voice, and they all wrote quite differently. Anthony Payne wrote very generously and expressively and with lots of adjectives, and Adrian Jack wrote very sort of cleanly and concisely, and they both actually reflected their ways of listening to music.

And they had the freedom to have their own voice, there was no sort of *Independent* house style in terms of the way you should approach music criticism?

No there wasn't a house style. There was a house style about how you wrote the titles of works, like if it was a made up name for a symphony it would be in inverted commas, like *Eroica*, (to show) the ones where the composer had given the name or where the name had been given afterwards. But that was just house style, it was a technical thing that I, editing their pieces, had to deal with because they weren't submitting stuff themselves electronically anyway, it was all going through a copytaker who, if it was one of them, knew how to put these things into the right style and if it was one of the casual ones they didn't. But that was the only sense on which there was a style. (1h00m10)

In terms of you giving feedback to music critics, was that done on a formal basis or regular basis?
No.

Was it just piece by piece?

Piece by piece. Normally you'd get the piece in by 10am or 11am or whenever. It always seems quite relaxed although it didn't feel relaxed at the time, but compared to the work I've done since it was jolly relaxed. You'd ring up and say 'sorry I don't understand what you mean here' or 'that was funny, I enjoyed that bit' or you might not need to ring them at all. You couldn't service everybody all the time. But I would say often pieces came in and you'd just ring and say 'thank you, that's great'.

So informal?

Yes. There wasn't any assessment or anything like that.

So was Bayan the only one in that area, the others were all over the country so they couldn't pop in and out of the office anyway?

Well they weren't all over the country, there were three or four London ones. Anthony Payne, Michael White wrote for a bit before he went to *The Independent on Sunday*, he wrote regularly. Bayan, well that's three London ones. But the idea of people dropping in just didn't really (happen), because what can people do when they drop in? I mean some of them I suppose did come in occasionally and bring their copy if they'd typed it. I think there was a lot of faxing then, I'm just trying to remember what the main medium was, but it was phoning the copy in mainly or sending it in if there was time.

Did they have couriers?

An awful lot of use, by excess.

So more informal feedback as and when you spoke to people on the phone?

Yes, there wasn't any need to give that kind of, 'oh how are we getting on?', because they weren't employed enough to need or deserve that sort of feedback.

Part B

So you started working for *The Times Educational Supplement*?

That's where I began yes, in the books and arts pages.

And did you say William Mann contacted you?

No it was John Higgins who actually contacted me, he rang up and said 'Stanley Sadie has now left, we're a bit thin on the ground', there was probably only William Mann and Paul Griffiths I think, and 'we need a third person so would you do the odd overnight review?' (1h17m25)

So I can ignore all my questions about responding to a job advert.

Yes. Well right at the beginning my job on *The Times Educational Supplement*, which was my very first journalistic job, that was by responding to an advert. It was advertised in *The Times Literary Supplement* and they said 'Sub Editor required for books and arts pages of *Times Educational Supplement*' and I was looking for a job in some sort of journalism or publishing or something and I thought 'well I'll apply for that'. So that was just totally, you know, I had no contacts, just went in cold and I was one of about 300 to be interviewed I think. So if I hadn't got that job I might have gone up a totally different path.

Had you been doing some sort of journalism or English or music course?

Well I'd done a degree in English and music so in a way it sort of matched. But I'd had no professional training. I really did train on the job. That job was an apprenticeship for me of the most wonderful sort. I mean every possible aspect for about six years and I knew nothing when I went in. I mean it was thanks to the Editor there having the vision to see that maybe I was of the material that could do this work. I'd written a postgraduate thesis so they could see that I could edit and write, that was about 70,000 words.

What qualification was that?

That was an MA, I think it would probably be more like a doctorate now. It was 70,000 words anyway and it was on aspects of 17th century poetry believe it or not.

So you'd got a degree in music and English and you did this MA. Can I ask where you did that?
Exeter.

I've been noticing that a lot of people had gone to Oxford and I wondered if you had?

No, I also did a Cert Ed in Cambridge, and in fact I used the Cambridge libraries quite a lot for that research because they're full of 17th century stuff so I was sort of poised between Cambridge and Exeter at that point, but my supervisor was in Exeter. So I did carry that thesis under my arm when I went for *The Times Educational Supplement* Sub job because it showed that you could put words together and edit yourself and you had edited yourself, but I'd never edited anyone else's copy.

Did they ask you to take along a portfolio?

No not at all, I had two interviews and I think at the second one I was given sort of tests. I was given unclean copy, and of course I didn't know what the professional markings were so I thought 'well this is going to do for me because they're going to discover that I don't know what to put in the margin'. But I just pencilled on what I would change in the copy and that was apparently good and he could see that I could edit copy straight away. But it was a long two interviews on all my thoughts and interests and this, that and the other because it was a huge job. You know, I had to get together five or six pages a week, do the picture research, commission the articles, writing was a very small part. I was doing production work and you know I'd be ringing up Patrick Moore one day and commissioning a review on astronomy or you know, every subject. But then they discovered that I'd read music. I had an Editor who pushed me to write, I have him to thank for that. I don't know if you want his name? It was Michael Church, who is now freelance himself, but he was the Arts and Literary Editor then and we had book pages of the standard of any publication, and arts pages, and then I began to write about music in education and I started a record review column. It was very good to have had the experience the other side of the fence because then you know what Editors think of writers and what a pain they

can be. You knew not to be too much of a pain yourself when relating to Editors in the future. But I don't think many of my colleagues got into it that way, we've all got into it in entirely different ways. (1h22m52)

And then you had a phone call from John Higgins, and you didn't need an interview because you were already in-house and he'd been reading your work?

He'd been reading my work, yes, and then I was under the tutelage of William Mann, in fact he drew up the schedule in those days of course, so John Higgins left it to him to decide what to give to me to review. (1h23m30)

So during that period 1981 – 1991, what qualities, qualifications or experience do you think were needed to become a broadsheet music critic and do you think the same criteria applied to music critics writing about classical music, jazz, rock and pop?

That I couldn't say, I really wouldn't like to compare. I have no idea what the criteria were for the other fields. I think the criteria then for classical music criticism, nobody would've said 'you must have a music degree' but you certainly would have to have a pretty thorough knowledge of classical music either from having done a degree or from having taught or having been a musician yourself or just having been so keen on classical music that you'd already clocked up an awful lot of concerts and you had an inkling of the difference between various performances of Beethoven's Fifth for instance and what to look out for. You weren't grilled on whether that was so but they'd have to sense or feel that that was the case, and so one was a degree of knowledge and then very importantly that you wrote well, that you could put over your ideas clearly, concisely and in a way that was a good read. Because ultimately you know you're there to sell the arts page to the powers that be in the paper and the paper is there to sell itself so you know, you've got to further that end, they don't want boring writers.

We've already touched upon this a way, but most of the journalists in my database are male and there are very few females. Did it feel like it was a bit of a boys club?

Oh definitely, absolutely. I felt quite alienated sometimes at various meetings, at the Critics Circle, it felt very much like a gentleman's club. It was only through the kindness of particular already established male colleagues who made a point of including me and introducing me to others, largely at that time through bodies like the Critics Circle which is far less important now but at that time that was the way we got to know each other, or quite often, because if you'd just go to a concert you don't know who your fellow critics are if you haven't been introduced, you wouldn't recognise a single one of them. But I did feel that, and when people used to ask me 'why?' I didn't know the answer. Whether it was traditionally because women didn't like going home late at night because then, without the new technology you had to take your piece in physically, write it by quarter past eleven, wait for the Subs to knock it into shape or whatever, make sure that everything was OK, leave the building at midnight and start your journey home. Now maybe it was because women didn't want that. But there was Joan Chissell who was the one person I looked at, but she was thought to be quite an exception and quite a sort of bluestocking. It was very much a man's club in the early 1980s, definitely. I would go up to take my seat at the Festival Hall, where we always had the same seats and on more than one occasion a steward would come up to me and say 'I'm sorry you can't sit there that's for *The Times* Critic', now I'm sure that it's because I was female, or maybe I was young and most of them were older. But it took a long while for people not to think I was pulling some sort of wool over their eyes when I went to collect press tickets, 'oh' you know I could see it in their face, 'you can't be *The Times* critic' that was definitely a perception, and lots of people wrote to me 'Dear Mr Finch' you know readers would write in, because Hilary can be a male name of course. So I mean it's far less like that now but then definitely, you know, 'you can't be *The Times* critic because you're a (female)' it's not what they said but I knew it's what they were thinking subconsciously. (1h28m48)

Do you feel that you wrote in a different way or in a different style or brought something extra to the paper by being female?

I've been asked that before and it's very difficult to know. I think I'd like to say 'no', because I think all these things you can try and read into it, like maybe women have more empathy or maybe this, that and the other, I don't think it's fair because I think there are male critics who have those qualities. I think we all have male and female qualities within us. If I brought anything extra it would be because I was me and not because I was a woman. (1h29m45)

In terms of financial reward, how did *The Times* determine level of pay?

I'd love to know. I've never known. All I can say is that the retainer I was offered on day one was exactly half my salary at that time. So a retainer was half an average writer's or editorial member, you know not a department head, but a sort of rank and file, it was half a salary and I would say it still is. But not many of my colleagues are lucky enough even to have a retainer, they're paid per concert. Now how they set the fee for a single review I've no idea. All I can say is it hasn't gone up much, if at all. There was also, I mean I don't mind saying this, there was also no rule about the increment at which my retainer, there was never a sort of set annual increment, it was at the Editor's discretion. My retainer was and still is annually renewable, has to be reviewed each year, and with that renewal there is no automatic incremental increase, it's at the Editor's discretion.

Was it a retainer that set out how many articles you would write in that year, so you'd be given an annual quota?

Yes it was a letter, it was called a letter of agreement. I've never had a contract as such which is legally binding. Within the period you're talking about it specified so many concerts a year, so many record columns a year and so many features a year and that was, if you like, a minimum. If you did more than that you had to count them up at the end of every year, do your accounts, and if it had say quoted for twelve features and you'd done fifteen you could then quote for three extra features at the rate of how much they would charge per feature. The same with concerts, you had to count every single concert you'd done, if it was not as much then it didn't matter but if you'd done more than however many it was you could then bill them or invoice them for those as one-offs. So in other words if you'd had a slack year you wouldn't earn less but if you were very busy you could earn more. That's how it worked. But I mean every paper and every person is entirely different. I've never enquired or known what my colleagues, even within *The Times*, even my music critic colleagues in *The Times*, what their arrangements were because there is a different arrangement for every single person.

So a 'personal contract' but not a contract?

Yes, quite. (1h33m34)

Did *The Times* offer you any long-term incentives, like a pension?

Nothing whatsoever, not even a contribution to national insurance. They did when I was salaried at *The Times Educational Supplement*.

I guess if you were freelance you'll probably say 'no', but did they ever invest in your personal or professional development, so training courses or qualifications?

No, no. There again I can only answer for myself but I'm pretty sure none of my colleagues have had such things. But I don't think such things are done with freelances because you're basically a freelance contributor, even if you're retained that's only to stop you writing for other papers. Your status is essentially totally freelance as self-employed.

Was there anything available to you, if you wanted to improve your knowledge, were there training courses available to music journalists that you could do independently, perhaps with the NUJ anything like that?

Well I never heard of any, I wasn't aware of any. It's not that sort of journalism, it's very much out on a limb, different from other forms of journalism.

Were there any barriers to your creativity during that period? Maybe editorial changes or increased bureaucracy and paperwork, anything like that?

I would say that occasionally, and I'd rather not obviously quote names, with certain editorial changes, in other words changes in Arts Editors and in the structure of who you were writing to, who was your boss in a way, if those changes were less than smooth or changes that went less well and were not very smooth or productive or were fraught with difficulties, I would for me yes it had a direct impact and again like the Dispute from the point of view of morale. That's a very personal response, other critics might have thought 'well it doesn't affect me, I'm not going to let it affect me' but I have to be honest and say yes those changes would affect me and only someone else could say whether it affected my writing. It could be if you read the reviews you would never guess which of those were more difficult, I would like to think that you wouldn't guess which were the more difficult periods, maybe it didn't show up in the writing, I hope. But yes I felt it, you felt differing degrees of confidence, differing degrees of your work being appreciated or not. (1h37m50)

Did they feel that because you were on a retainer they had you 'under the thumb' if you like, that they could phone you up at short notice and say 'can you do this by three o'clock this afternoon?'
Definitely. I would say that was so. In fact I think someone actually said it once when I complained and they said 'you are on a retainer, you're not just a casual contributor'. So it's a sort of unwritten gentleman's agreement, obviously you're not expected to be as available and responsible as if you're salaried because then you're expected to do anything more or less, but a degree of that yes definitely, by being on a retainer, because it carries a certain status and therefore (you're) often rung up, either to be cancelled or to be swapped or to take on something extra or if a colleague suddenly has to do an interview in the States will I take over his review that night? I mean I can say 'no' but yes, it happens quite a lot and did then. Yes.

You were talking about feedback as well, you said that some Editors were good and others weren't so good at giving feedback. But during that period was it the case that you started off having lots of feedback and then it decreased or did it become more likely that they would give you feedback?
That's tricky isn't it. I can never remember when Richard Morrison took over as Arts Editor because I think 1981 – 1991 might have been all John Higgins, unless he left in about 1988. It's very difficult. Though of course Richard took over before John died, Richard took over while John was still alive. John Higgins did give me feedback occasionally, he would give advice, he would usually for me, you know, 'try and be a bit more precise, one adjective instead of three' and he would do that very infrequently and it would be very much to the point and it would be courteously done. But very little and certainly no ongoing feeling of whether I was doing the job well or not. Just occasionally, something like once a year, he would send a little memo as they were in those days, no email, praising you, just perhaps once every two years it would come like a bolt out of the blue. He'd just been moved to say 'I thought you did a really good job last night' or something. But that has not been done since. But you're only interested in those ten years anyway, but the general thing is nil feedback, you don't know how you're doing, you don't know how your work is regarded, you don't know if they think 'that Hilary Finch is really good, glad to have her on board' or whether they think 'God another boring piece by Hilary Finch'. You have no idea, that's from ones colleagues and Editors. John Higgins was not expansive and warm, he was extremely professional, old-style. But he would do those, just every now and then, as a sort of gentlemanly comment. (1h42m28)

It's good though because you know they are reading it and taking an interest.
But very, very little I have to say. Extremely little.

To what extent did you feel you were able to shape the actual arts page or music section? I mean if they were thinking of changing the layout of the arts page or putting in a new music page or something, how involved would you be?

Hardly at all. No, one's opinions were not asked and not welcomed. It was considered not your patch. I mean I did do two things, as I say I think I was the first one to suggest and write the features interview and I also did something, it's a sort of tangent to your question, but I invented the idea of the summer festivals supplement.

Yes I've seen some of those.

Which of course is widely done now, but shrinking now. I don't know what gave me the idea but I thought that there's all these music festivals throughout Europe and would they like a listing as it were of all that, March to September under countries, and it was a double page spread. So I sort of initiated that. That's not exactly answering your question, it's not exactly influencing, it's influencing the way something went but it's not influencing the shape of the arts page.

But you obviously had the freedom and the scope to suggest that?

Exactly, well those ideas in those days were welcomed. I wouldn't dream of putting it forward these days because a) it wouldn't be considered, you know 'well if we want that sort of thing we'll ask you' it would be considered almost an impertinence and b) to be honest, you know, anything that took up extra space where would they get the money from or the pages from to allow it to happen? But in the 1980s, in that decade, ideas like that, not the shaping of the existing page but for a new idea or a new contribution, were welcomed. I mean it wasn't in any way in my brief as a critic to do that sort of thing but if you were keen to do it they'd do it and I'd be paid for it on a one-off basis. (1h45m21)

Not any more, that would be seen as impertinent?

Well yes, it's not your job to suggest that sort of thing because there are people in the office who are paid to do that. It is a change. Contributors, there's a much bigger gap now, I'm sure it's to do with the technology, between the contributors who are 'out there' on the other end of the email and the people who are in the office and in-house who have got their own ideas. We are just sort of out there now, whereas we used to be very, because we physically went in you see we didn't communicate by email, we took in copy, we went in and had a chat, we had lunch. So contributors were much more an organic part of the editorial team in that decade than they are now, and more at the beginning of that decade than at the end of it. (1h46m25)

They never called in all of the music journalists?

No we never all met together. Though I think *The Financial Times* did that, they had a monthly meeting. But we never saw each other unless we chose to meet socially. At the very beginning when we took in our copy at night of course we'd see each other slaving away at the desk but there wasn't a second to speak because we were all writing to deadline. But as soon as we stopped going in, as soon as we did it by email, we'd never ever see each other unless we'd make an arrangement to do so.

When I started this project I naively thought that the paper would perhaps say 'The Independent is doing x, y or z let's get all the music people in together and brainstorm some ideas?'

I think probably *The Times* did that less than the, I mean I'm sure that happened a little on other, I know it happened on *The Financial Times*. I should think we were probably always the most undemocratic in that way, you know the critics did what they were told really. It never worried me. I once did suggest to Paul Griffiths that we might meet and discuss things and he said something like 'I don't think that will be necessary'.

What level of administrative support did you receive, things like making arrangements for going to concerts?

There again it's different on every paper, but again we're talking about that period are we? Much higher level than I have now. We've always had all our tickets, no wait a minute let's get this right. For the main London venues the tickets are ordered from within the office for the main venues, by which I mean Southbank, Barbican, Wigmore Hall, Royal Opera and English National Opera. Anything outside of that, smaller London venues, regional London venues, we're expected, I've never understood the rationale of this, but we're expected to get the phone number as it was then, get the website or whatever, and do that all ourselves, request the tickets ourselves when we see what we've been put down for, apart from those main London venues. So that's tickets. Within that decade all the rail travel or air travel and hotel booking was also done by the sort of in-house travel office. It's been contracted out to different companies all the time, but *The Times* travel office or travel company, so when you got your schedule you'd say 'right I need a hotel for 25th September in Leeds and the return train fare, or Belfast', they would do all that for you.

Do you know if they did that for all the other genres?

I presume they did, but I don't know. I haven't a clue. I can't believe it would be any different for theatre or jazz or dance.

And you said that's no longer the case?

Well we still officially have a travel company but it doesn't work in the same way, it's not as efficient. I book things myself. But that's my choice, it could still all be done. There is still a *Times* travel company who will book travel and hotels. But it's not done automatically. I think on *The Telegraph* the critic never has to think about anything like that, it's just all done. We have to go through the schedule, I mean I put aside a morning every month for doing all that admin because I have to request, even if the travel company books it, I have to say 'I want a hotel for this date, I want a rail fare for this date, are you going to put it in the post or email it?' You know, I have to sort of do it all. (1h51m37)

Is there anything else that you think was important in terms of the employment situation that I've missed, in terms of how it might have affected your writing?

I suppose the fact that my retainer is on a yearly basis, renewable every year, you could argue two ways. It either keeps you on the ball, which is I think their idea, or when things are not going as well it could have a negative affect on your morale because you might think 'I might be gone in a year'. You are kept in a state of, I would say, suspended insecurity. Now whether that is to do with, from their point of view, financial reasons, it clearly is a lot to do with finance, or whether different Editors have

seen it differently, some would justify it by saying 'well it keeps you on your toes, you can never feel complacent'. I don't know would I write better if I felt 100% secure. It's a very tricky point because everyone reacts differently depending on your temperament. Some people find insecurity actually makes them sharper writers. I think security would make me write better than anything at all but I may be wrong. It's a difficult psychological thing, but I would say it is a factor. It is a factor. But then, you know, nowadays I think probably everyone feels like that about their job, but within that decade there were lots of people that could feel secure about their jobs and I would say that knowing I was on an annual retainer always gave me the edge of insecurity and I wouldn't really like to say, I really wouldn't like to say, whether that had a good or a bad effect on my writing. That would be for someone else to judge. I mean with contracts all you've got is three months notice I suppose.

(From Section A)

Just out of curiosity, did you write for other publications as well?

Well I was given a retainer, which nowadays I think is quite rare, but because they wanted to get me from a full time salaried job they really had to offer me a retainer to make me feel some sense of security. That retainer was about half my current salary then and that's what I spoke about - having to make up the difference. Now the understanding of that retainer was that I could write for anything else but not another newspaper, at all. No other newspaper. But I could write for magazines and I could broadcast.

Part B

So you were freelance at *The Independent* from 1987 to 1991, how did you secure your engagement with *The Independent*?

Well Bayan got in touch with me.

I wondered if they advertised jobs, but it was word of mouth?

I mean every now and again they'd start running out of people and they would ask themselves who's around, and I was a good candidate because I'd been mainly with the children and just writing stuff for magazines and so I was known to be there and semi-dormant, so they kind of activated me.

It's difficult if you weren't responding to a job advert, but my question was 'what qualities, qualifications and experience were they looking for', did they ever specify?

Well no, because Bayan already knew who I was. I think it was all on personal judgement actually. I mean I did have a music degree and did have years of experience writing music criticism and Bayan knew that and he wouldn't have got in touch with me otherwise. But Editors don't really mind so much about this degree business or whether you've studied music, they're much more interested in if you've got flair as a writer, or what they'd regard as flair as a writer. There's always more people around wanting to do it than there are jobs, and there are all sorts of people. There are some who are in other branches of journalism who are music lovers who'd just like to do that, opera especially is very prone to those ones, you know they've been a Features Editor or something and they want to wind down at the end of their career and they say 'can I be the opera critic'. So there's the journalists who want to do it, and then there's all the people who've actually studied music for one reason for another and they're either being academics and they want to do something on the side or they're being performers or they're working in the BBC or whatever and maybe it's not going as fast or as far as they want and you know musicians tend to know each other, so it's all those things as well. I think newspapers won't normally take a gamble on a complete stranger. You'll have to have come from somewhere, either magazines or word people. If somebody was just going to do it cold they'd get in touch with a magazine rather than a newspaper. But I've never seen jobs for critics advertised. (29m30)

So as a freelance writer did *The Independent* chose to pay its writers by perhaps the number of words or was it by the type of article, so for example you'd get a fixed amount for a feature?

Yes it was a fixed amount, for a feature or for a review. But they did tell you how many words should be in it and you couldn't deviate from that very much or you'd be in trouble. They wouldn't come back to a person who kept over writing for instance. You'd be in the shit if you kept doing that. And in fact that's something that changed in those years really because there was much more a sort of sense that music journalists were a protected species if you go back to the 1970s, and there were lots who wrote things in illegible long hand and the people at the newspaper had to decipher it or they'd write far too much and somebody would edit it. There was much more latitude to give work to the Sub Editors, it didn't matter how much work the Subs had. Whereas as everything got under more financial pressure, or people interpreted the financial pressures differently, making Subs have to do extra work was no longer popular or even accepted by the end of the 1980s. No matter who you were really. (31m38)

So they weren't paying x amount for 400 words and x amount for 500 words? It was literally that they'd commission...

Yes they'd commission you for whatever it was and say this is how many words it needs to be. They did have a rate, and I don't know if it was the same for all forms of journalism, probably not, but they did have a rate per 100 words I think, but you didn't get more by writing more. (32m06)

Just going back a bit, but would the Arts Editor issue a schedule at the start of the week or month telling you who you'd got to go and watch and review or would they say 'you've got a 500 word feature next week, fill it with whatever you like'?

No, with me anyway, they always told me what they wanted. That decision was always made in the centre and I think that's typical of broadsheets. They've got very little patience in this field with

people coming along and saying 'there's something really interesting I'd like to review', they just don't really have time. It probably happens once in a blue moon. Mind you I'm lazy, so I was never really trying to phone anyone up and saying 'I'd love to do so and so'. But there's a slight suspicion about, I mean having worked on the other side of it, because I used to commission stuff for *Music and Musicians*, and so having worked on the other side of it, lining up all the critics to see what they were going to be reviewing, my antennae would start to quiver slightly if someone phoned me up and said 'oh there's this frightfully interesting thing I'd really like to review' because it nearly always turned out to be something by a friend of theirs and it wasn't really quite fair. And that was a big concern in the 1970s actually, it sort of continued to be a concern in the 1980s but I think it got a bit blurred by the end of the 1980s, the idea that you wouldn't give anybody special advantages and the idea that nepotism was a bad thing or that, you know, friends of friends were a bad thing, all that was very strong in the 1970s and coming up into the 1980s, but I think that wavered quite a lot as the 1980s continued. (34m25)

As far as you are aware, did music journalists at *The Independent* receive similar remuneration irrespective of genre, do you know for example if they were paying classical writers much more than pop writers or visa versa if pop writers were at the top of the hierarchy?

I don't know at all. I guess it would be more to do with the sort of status of the journalist, which is funny considering that *The Independent* didn't want to have people with big followings. But then that's precisely why they didn't want to have people with big followings because those people could then bargain for more money, so they thought 'keep them all down' and in fact there were instances where people got a bit too famous and asked for more and then just were dropped. But I wouldn't know, I suspect that people writing about rock got more but I don't know.

As a freelance, and I'm guessing that you'll probably say no, but did they ever invest in your professional development? No. Any long term rewards offered to you like pensions? No.

Did they ever offer you or provide feedback on your work? Did they call you in once every six months for example and say 'you're doing a splendid job on this, we'll have more of that please'. No. So you just submitted the work and if it got printed you'd just assume it was OK.

Yes, that's about it. If you found that somebody was editing your copy a lot more, that could mean that you were doing it wrong or it could mean that you'd got a mad Sub Editor, and both things were equally likely actually so you never really knew. And sometimes mad Sub Editors didn't last very long because everybody agreed they were mad and in fact you always had the option of phoning up and saying my copy was completely murdered by the Sub Editor. (37m02)

So no formal process was in place for meeting with you to see you how things were going?

No. That meeting I told you about with Tom Sutcliffe was pretty rare in journalism I think. I mean even just the gesture of inviting the critics in to say hello all at once, so that you even saw each other rather than just being creatures slipping out of the shadows, that was rare and a very nice and imaginative thing for him to do. (37m29)

Yes I've been asking my other interviewees if the Music Editors ever got all of their music journalists in one room and said 'we're thinking of changing the layout of the page or adopting a different approach, and what do you all think, what are your ideas?' No. So no collective brainstorming or whatever they might have called it. No.

So those sort of decisions were left at Editorial level?

Well probably Bayan got consulted about things like that, and anybody else they had on salaries, there might have been people on half salaries, one or two I think. So they might have.

What was the most common source of conflict within your professional environment and how was that typically resolved?

It was always about somebody putting a full stop in the wrong place. I mean if there was any conflict at all it was that, it was, you know, 'this Sub Editor has made me say the opposite of what I wanted to say'.

And did you receive any administrative support from staff at *The Independent*, so perhaps if you needed to go on a trip or something would they arrange the travel or the hotel or anything like that?
No, no, you'd have to arrange that. They arranged your tickets of course, not travel tickets but I mean concert tickets. You never had to worry about ringing people up and saying I want tickets for something, that was all there for you at the box office. (39m40)

And do you get the impression they did that for everybody, irrespective of genre, or was it just classical?
Yes, I'm sure they did it for everyone, but I don't know. Obviously you could get expenses for things, not that I ever did, but if you were going on a trip somewhere you could ask them to help with the expenses and they'd decide if they would or if they wouldn't. But I didn't have much to do with that side of things. There was quite an interesting turn around on *The Guardian* about that, because newspapers had traditionally quite liked it when some outside festival or something said 'we invite you to Monaco for three days and then you can write something' but *The Guardian* sort of got very, very worried, and I'm not sure when this was, probably the end of the 1980s, about the potential for corruption that represented and they wouldn't let anyone go on any trips unless they themselves were willing to pay for it. *The Guardian* would put up money if they decided the project was worthwhile, they themselves would pay a certain amount for travel and accommodation, but they wouldn't accept offers from promoters of anything to take you somewhere. (41m)

Was there a sense that maybe editorial staff were getting offers from PR departments and that that might have been influencing who they chose for you to write about?

Yes, but that was obviously the anxiety. I only came across it, because I wrote one article in a blue moon for *The Guardian*, but I don't know any concrete instances I just know that they became very anxious. (41m55)

Thank you, that's absolutely fascinating. I've been asking writers from the other papers which I've been looking at about what impact *The Independent* actually had, and so I've got that perspective, but I'm quite keen to get to the core of what *The Independent* was about and what it wanted to do.

The thing is, it was all on a hot needle and a burnt thread anyway. I mean they were quite confident for the first five months or something and then they began to realise that the money was running out, I mean the ownership changed, you'll know the details of this and I don't, but at some point the co-operative way it was set up changed and Tony O'Reilly bought it who owns, does he bring out *The Irish Independent* as well? I mean he's just a real tycoon type, like the other newspaper owners. He doesn't interfere particularly but it's all about money. So *The Independent* didn't really have very long to carry out its self-imposed mission before it just fell into the ways of other newspapers. (47m25)

Part B

So career history. You've already said that you were freelance for the *Sunday Times* or was that just initially?

Yes, that was initially, I mean I always was freelance, I was never staff. I was only ever on a freelance contract. Because that's one of the things that Murdoch was very keen on, was not employing people but having them on contract. Casualising the workforce which of course a lot of people objected to. But I didn't mind because I'd only ever had casual jobs so that was fine with me.

So although you were freelance you had some sort of contract?

I did after a year or so yes. It specified a number of articles, I can't remember what it was.

So per year you had to produce so many articles.

Yes, and if I produced more then I'd get paid more and all that sort of thing. That was with the *Sunday Times*. With all the other stuff I did, with *Q* and things, that was all freelance.

So for everybody else just freelance?

Yes. But I was lucky to have a contract, lots of people didn't have them. I remember it was an opinion piece I wrote about Albert Goldman's biography of John Lennon that attracted the attention of the Editor who decided they would make me the rock critic which was when the contract was drawn up. The paper needed a rock critic. (1h12m12)

I was going to say how did they spot you or how did they find you, but that's already answered that question.

Well they didn't really find me, I found them. I think I noticed that the *Telegraph* reviews that I'd done paid me better than I thought they would and I thought maybe this is something I should look at more carefully so I started writing for the *Sunday Times*, but on a very casual basis, they would only print an article a month sort of basis and that was after I got back in touch with Mick Brown who I mentioned to you earlier who had me as his kind of understudy.

So you wrote this review on the book on John Lennon, they needed a rock critic and they basically picked up the phone and gave you a call?

Well I'd already been writing for them for some time at that point. That review would have run in about 1987, 88, or whenever the book came out. I'd been writing for them regularly but not every week. After I was made rock critic then the presumption was that I would have an article more or less every week. But the relationship had been in play for a year or so when that happened.

Did you approach them with the book review?

Yes I'd always fancied doing book reviews because I'd studied English at University and I thought if there's one thing I can do it is review books.

It was Oxford wasn't it? Yes. So that's how you got spotted.

Yes. I mean 'spotted' is not quite how it was really. It was a matter of, as I say, Mick Brown wanted somebody to understudy for him. He'd met me he liked one of the things I'd written for the *Telegraph*. It was very casual and it built up over a period of eighteen months until whenever it was they decided I was going to be the rock critic and that was that.

So I don't need to ask you about interviews and selection tests?

No, no, no there was none of that. Although funnily enough, I think one of the things that made me attractive to them, to the Editor, was the fact that I had a bit of history in radio and I'd done music for various dramas that had been performed on Radio 3. That, I think, made them think I was more of a kind of person than just some bloke who, this could be completely wrong, but the impression I got was that made me a slightly more welcome figure than I might otherwise have been. Because newspapers always like to feel that you've got ins in other worlds that they can sort of tap into, bringing some useful contacts with you never goes amiss you know.

Mind you, if you were doing bits and pieces for them anyway I guess it was like an informal trial period really?

Yes, and let's not forget also that at this time it was very infrequent, what I did really. Mick Brown did most of what we needed and I just did bits and pieces.

So was pay based on the number of words that you produced or was it by the type of article?

No, it was extremely informal, rather annoyingly so. It was based on my Editor's calculation of how much work I'd done. It never seemed to relate particularly closely to wordage. It does now, it's much more word orientated. But then it didn't seem to. It was very weird.

I wondered if there was a fixed rate for say a 500 word article?

I think there was but I don't think I got it. In fact I know that I wasn't treated very well in that regard. The *Sunday Times* in those days would pay their star writers and the people they took seriously quite big money, and they never did particularly with me. I mean I managed to ratchet my contract up successfully by various negotiating manoeuvres, but it was never especially well paid. But the great thing about the *Sunday Times* was it got you noticed. This is not relevant to you but one of the things I always wanted to do was work in Radio, and I used the *Sunday Times* to force my way into radio and of course radio liked the fact that I wrote for the *Sunday Times*, so it was a mutual thing. And almost as soon as I started writing regularly for the *Sunday Times* I started contributing to these Radio 4 arts programmes. And in 1990 I started doing for Radio 3 the weekly music programme, which I still do today, called Mixing It. So the *Sunday Times* was hugely useful to me in that respect because it was a great way of, I mean 'I write for the *Sunday Times*' nowadays it doesn't carry the same weight that it did then, except amongst those people who thought the *Sunday Times* was evil for having got the printers out. (1h18m25)

So there wouldn't for example be a higher rate of pay for a preview than a review, it didn't work like that?

No it didn't work like that, I could never figure out how it was done. It was all done by this man Whitby (check spelling) on the back of an envelope basis. All I was aware of was the theatre guys got better paid than I did, because I knew one of them. But I can't remember the figures now I'm sorry to say because it was a long time ago. But equally I was aware of the fact that I was getting much better paid, especially for things like book reviews, than people writing for just about every other newspaper or magazine.

So they paid well for book reviews?

Pretty well. By the fairly meagre standards that most music journalists were used to. I mean it paid way better than Q. Q paid £100 per 1000 words when they started, which meant that if you wrote one of their 100 word reviews you got paid ten pounds and that was pretty much the going rate. Now the *Sunday Times* paid many times over that, I suppose they must have paid me about £200 or £300 per 1000. £250 per 1000 and I think was what the *Sunday Times* roughly paid. £250-£300. Which was more or less three times what you got for writing for Q. You'd need to check that with some of your other people but that's my recollection of it. You tended to be paid on what you were commissioned to write. They very often cut things, so I remember for example that I wrote a big piece on country music which was commissioned I think at 1500 words well they ended up running about two thirds of it, but I still remember getting paid £400 for that, did I? Well anyway. (1h21m03)

As far as you're aware, you've said about book reviews paying particularly well, but did all the different genres, so music journalists covering classical or jazz...?

Well I think they got paid more than I did, I'm almost certain they did. I don't know how much they would have got paid. I bet David Cairns was on a better whack than I was, I'm sure he was.

So this comes back to the hierarchy issue again.

Yes, in the arts hierarchy pop, especially in the *Sunday Times*, was very much at the bottom. I don't suppose at *The Independent* it was quite like that. But Dave Hill would be able to tell you about that.

Did the broadsheets offer you any other long term rewards, pensions or job security?

No there was no job security. What they did offer was an entrée into other areas of the media. Especially once I was the *Sunday Times* rock critic I was, as were many of the *Sunday Times* critics, I was immediately airlifted in to Sky News so you had a presence on television which was quite useful, and that led to other certain things. There was the radio stuff. It was a very good way of.... because I

always wanted to be a multi-media person rather than just a print journalist. I loved radio in particular, and always wanted to work in radio.

Thinking of non-financial reward, did you get any feedback from the Editors, or even the readers?

Hardly any. Readers occasionally wrote in to complain about something, but not really. They'd sometimes say they liked something, but not really. That's one of the reasons I like working in radio, because you have a much warmer relationship and a more active relationship with your listeners than you do with your readers. And readers when they get in touch are normally getting in touch to complain whereas listeners are usually getting in touch to say how they like something. It's a curious fact of life, and I'm not sure why it's so exactly. But the unmistakable sense you get is that most readers are rather antagonistically disposed towards writers at newspapers.

And Editors you didn't get any feedback from?

Not really. Nothing of any consequence.

So very much self-motivated.

Yes, I guess. I was.

Were you ever called in on an annual basis for just a general catch up on things?

Only to renegotiate my contract. And that was instigated by you? Yes, with the Managing Editor.

Did the *Sunday Times* in any way contribute to your professional development, other than opening doors, did they invest in training or anything similar?

No, no, no, nothing. No, the casualisation of the editorial staff was their main priority. They were not interested in training anybody. Their presumption was that because you were writing for the *Sunday Times* you were already (trained). I think they would have been horrified if they knew how unqualified I was really. I mean the fact that I started writing for the *Sunday Times* was a matter of some considerable mystification, especially to people who had been soldiering away in the music press who had managed to claw their way up to some sort of position at *The Guardian*. They didn't like it. I was made to feel like an interloper at times. I guess you bump into these people when you go to gigs and things? Yes, and it was noticeable that they were not always particularly friendly. (1h26m36)

I guess there was rivalry, with everybody sussing each other out?

Everybody knew that the *Sunday Times* was a good paying gig. There was one particular person whose nose was particularly put out of joint.

So from a professional development point of view what was available to you, if anything at all, to keep you and your professional career up to date?

Just reading what other people wrote, listening to the music. I mean it was a tremendous learning thing for me and I would never have been able to hack it if I had been in a daily newspaper and having to feed them more regular stuff. The fact that I could choose and research my subjects, I had a sort of eighteen month period of getting to know the ropes. I mean the other thing I wrote for, which probably hasn't come up on your database, I wrote, as did Clive Davis, I really learned how to be a journalist on the *London Daily News* whose Arts Editor, a woman I'm still friendly with called Sue Summers, noticed something I wrote for the *Sunday Times* and just phoned me up and got me a few things. Now she got me to do lot of stuff that wasn't music related, mostly what I did was music related, but it wasn't all music related. But it was done on a fast turnaround and I learned a lot about just how to put pieces together, how to construct pieces. That was a very useful learning experience. Her deputy who was my immediate point of contact was a woman called Amanda Patel who has since become a rather strident Glenda Slag type, she was William Hague's publicity person, she's parlayed a kind of career for herself as one of these strident lady columnists. The *London Daily News*, that was owned by Robert Maxwell. It was one of the doors the *Sunday Times* opened. If I'd been writing articles for *The Guardian* or something it probably wouldn't have happened. But everyone assumed that because I was writing for the *Sunday Times* that I knew my stuff, and I didn't actually. But I did once I started writing for the *Daily News*. It only existed for five months. But I was writing for them almost every day and that was hugely good at getting one into a 'let's go' mode. (1h30m33)

How, if at all, did you ever receive any feedback on the quality of your work, you've said about readers writing in.

I didn't really. It was other journalists more. Other journalists read things I wrote and were quite encouraging. Mick Brown was quite encouraging, Paul DuNoyer at *Q* was quite encouraging. It was them really. I've always felt that journalists are the only people who give you any decent feedback, your peers. David Sinclair, he and I used to play in bands together so, yes the feedback from other journalists was the main thing. I think you'll find that most journalists, certainly David and I used to talk about each others pieces quite a bit and sort of compare notes.

Was there any conflict at all in your professional environment, perhaps with Editors or other journalists?

Well no not the journalists immediately around me but as I said they could be quite unfriendly in certain social contexts because they resented the fact I was this cuckoo-like creature that had come and grabbed a place in one of the better places to be. Conflict at work, not really. I mean journalists are not particularly nice people as I'm sure you know, they are sort of loner-ish and slightly suspicious, slightly misanthropic characters a lot of the time, although they can be quite matey and sort of apparently clubbable. So I don't know, there probably were some people who didn't like me. But it didn't really bother me because I didn't really work in the office I did it all at home. I wasn't aware of it.

And no recurring sources of conflict with the *Sunday Times*?

No I had a pretty good relationship with the *Sunday Times*, I still do. Never had any problems with them. They've always treated me fairly well. I mean they're tough because they're a very commercially minded newspaper, so they don't feather bed you in any respect, never have me. But the editorial power that they wield, they could be much tougher than they are. (1h33m25)

Part B

So when you were writing for *The Times* between 1985 and 1991 were you employed as an employee of the newspaper or freelance? Freelance. Have you always been freelance?

Yes, always been freelance. The majority are actually, or were, but that changed again. The key people now would be on the payroll, or at least on contract, but back then it was either people who were already employed by the paper moonlighting, just doing it as extra as a way to get tickets for a show or to get the records, and for a lot of people, like me, it was freelance.

So how did you get the job – because I think I read on *Rocks Back Pages* that you previously did research for Wogan and the *Rock and Roll Years*? Were you invited on board by someone who knew you?

Yes, basically, I was literally just asked to do a review of Meatloaf at the Hammersmith Odeon, which I've referred to already I think, by a guy called Nicholas Shakespeare, who was at that time the Deputy Arts Editor of *The Times*, and he had also worked at the BBC. When he got the job at *The Times* the first thing the Arts Editor said to him, John Higgins that was, was that we must get someone to write something about pop and rock, because we haven't got anyone doing it. So he thought of me, because I worked at the BBC as well and I knew him vaguely from that and he knew I wrote for *Kerrang!* and other magazines. Although I wouldn't have thought I would have been an obvious choice for that reason. And he phoned me up on a Friday night and said 'would you like to review Meatloaf for *The Times*?, they're playing tomorrow night at Hammersmith', I said 'I'd love to', and he said 'well we won't promise to publish it all, it's completely on spec, but if we publish it you'll get £30', I think it was £30, it was a good rate at the time. And that was in 1985 and I did it, and it ran, and then John Higgins phoned me up and said 'nice review can you suggest a few others?', so I think I said 'well the Ramones are playing next week', he said 'fine', and literally that was it and from that point on it was just one thing at a time (20m32). I still don't even really know now if I particularly got the job.

Having said that, for a very long time I did album reviews and I did a column for them every week in the late 90s where I had a nice picture by-line and everything, but even that was all completely, well it just came out on my statement, you know, everything I wrote got a payment, and if I didn't write anything I didn't get anything. (21m15)

So there was no security?

No never had the slightest. Some people in my position do negotiate contracts. Clive Davis the jazz critic for example, but I don't think he's got a contract now. But the problem with that is, when the contract ends, and it's usually only for a year, then they have to take a big decision, are they going to carry on with it or not, and you have to make a big decision, and some of these contracts are quite exclusive, you can't write for other people if you take the contract. Some of them are a bit demanding, they might want you to write three pieces a week come hell or high water, and maybe they'll publish them and maybe they don't. So you have to make a commitment and they have to make a commitment, and it's never quite been the moment for me to be honest. I've never gone with it, I've always just written for loads of people and just got paid for what I've done.

So complete artistic freedom, you're your own boss?

Or totally insecurity, it depends how you want to look at it really. Certainly there was a period when I earned more money doing it that way, it was fantastically to my advantage in certain periods to get paid for everything I wrote and did, rather than be paid a broad amount, not now I have to say, less so now I have to say. (23m13)

In terms of reward, in particular level of pay, I'm guessing that you were commissioned to write but you would never know if it would get published?

By and large it would get published, and it would be unusual for it not to, and if it wasn't you'd get the fee, as long as it's been commissioned that's it. If they don't run it they pay, so that means they tend to run it. That's another thing, with a contract they're going to pay you whether they run it or not so if you're not on a contract and they don't commission things they don't have to pay then. If you're on a contract you can send things in and they might not publish them. You get a much better strike rate as a

freelance because they're going to have to pay for that precise piece of work so it's more in their interests to make sure it does go out.

So you'd get paid according to each commissioned piece?

Well I did, but be careful about extrapolating that too much. It's a very sort of ducking and diving kind of life to be honest, or it was.

So was there a fixed pay scale, for example a fixed rate for a 500 word article irrespective of whether you are writing for classical music or jazz or rock or pop?

Yes, I think it's a word rate, I mean some star writers maybe got more, I don't know. Mostly it's, whatever it is for 1000 words, and a review as I say when I started was something like £30.

So does the article type commissioned make a difference – would maybe an interview would attract more money?

That would be more like 1000 words, so from a freelancer point of view it's alright, but what it means is, that doesn't really take into account sometimes, so if you for example have to go to New York for an interview, I mean obviously it's a nice thing to do and people like to do it, but you write the same amount of words as you'd just met a guy here, but you get paid the same irrespective. So you might have spent three days travelling to get the story and still get the same rate as if you'd just done it in a hotel in Knightsbridge. But then there's other benefits of going on those trips, it's a nice trip to go and do something. And I guess you could claim expenses for travel? Yes (27m26)

Were there any other factors that determined different levels of reward such as qualifications?

Well, I've always been on a fixed word rate. I've never been big enough to send my agent in demanding some kind of increased rate but no doubt Julie Burchill or Simon Hattenstone, or you know, Giles Coren or whoever it is, those big name writers might. But in music terms in the 80s I don't think there was anyone really. There was no one who had that sort of clout. I think we were all pretty much on a level. I mean, nowadays though it might be different, although I don't think there's any real star writers who just write about music, there's no one demanding a higher word rate that I'm aware of. You might discover differently.

When I was doing my weekly column which had a picture by-line and was the main component of the block coverage each week, I was just getting whatever the going rate was, it might have been a bit better, I can't even think what it was now, but it was what you'd expect to get for writing that many words. Maybe Caitlin Moran, gets more, she must be on a big contract, I'd think she gets quite a lot. But they certainly work her, she's in there every single day doing something, from television reviews to the opinion Editorial pieces. It's quite tough, you've got to really commit to it and you've got to really do it and they've got to really like you.

So no long terms rewards like pensions or anything?

It's frightening Jennifer I tell you, there's nothing, I've got a tiny little pension accruing somewhere. (30m06) It's shocking really? Well it is and it isn't. If I'd wanted a good pension and all those kind of things I'd have got a different sort of job and I haven't had a bad living out of it really, when you consider that it's something that most people would really enjoy doing and it's all been done on my own terms. But I'd imagine there's going to be a certain amount of down sizing going on as the years go by. But you see on the other hand it's something you can keep doing. I've been through periods when there's been unbelievable recession, the 80s in particular was time when many people out of work because of Thatcher, her policies were responsible for putting loads of people on the dole. But I've never really had to worry about that. You're very much a master of your own fate, and so long as you can keep persuading people to take this stuff and you've got a reasonable network of contacts, it's great and you're very lucky really. (31m21).

In terms of learning and development, did the newspapers ever invest in your development or anything like that? (31m41) No. So was it left up to you to continually develop your own style?

Yes, totally. I've often thought this. Absolutely no training, no qualifications, no transferable skills whatsoever. I mean, it's completely busking it, winging it or whatever you want to call it, from start to finish. No one's ever taught me how to do an interview, the only background I got in that was when I worked for Wogan, strangely enough, which you mentioned earlier. We used to write the interview questions for a guy there and then interview the stars before he did so that we could tell him what they were likely to say and which questions they were likely to go ballistic over and I, to this day, think

back to him. Chris his name was, Chris Greenwood, a real old school television researcher/ producer kind of character. And he just had various things, or his tropes I suppose you'd say, about how to construct an interview, how to approach various subjects, areas of interest blah blah blah. And that was the only time any one had ever steered me in the right direction at all. But no, as far as the newspapers were concerned, they just wanted to see the finished thing and they couldn't care less about anything else, very wild west really.

So no investment. (33m23)

No. Although they did show me how to use the computer technology to send stuff through, the modem and that. I did have a couple of sessions up there when that came in. The guy gave me some software to make it happen, pirated I think in fact. I've often thought it was, I mean he just gave it to me, this disc, there was never any proper manual or any sort of copyright arrangement, I'm sure they just copied out a bunch and gave them to us.

So basically, so if you wanted to do qualifications or anything like that, that was completely up to you, they wouldn't fund you to get a qualification? (34m34)

I don't think so at all. It's just a voracious machine, it just wants the words with as little fuss and bother as possible. Sometimes individual Editors would spend a bit of time, you know, Editors are there to guide you as well as commission you I guess. When I was doing my weekly column I would have a long phone conversation with the Arts Editor every Monday morning where we would arrive at whatever the subject was going to be, and also what kind of line to take. But to be honest it was as much an irritation as a help. Sometimes they came up with some good ideas and it was helpful, but other times you'd think 'what the hell, do I really have to write that?', whatever it was, Eminem's personal problems, or something. Often it would be a subject I wasn't very interested in, so you did get guidance, and I'm sure it might be different for the bigger writers, the people who are up there a bit more. But back then, again we're talking about 81-91, if we just go back to your timeframe, there was nothing really, nothing like that at all, not for me anyway. Maybe other people got more out of it. (36m06)

How did you maintain your creative edge and what barriers existed during that period, for example Editorial changes, increased controls or bureaucracy? (36m36)

Boredom, I suppose, is the main one. It's just a job after a while and although it's a great job and a lot of people would like to be doing it, it's still a job. I suppose a certain element of repetition creeps in and you find it's hard sometimes to approach it with the same degree of enthusiasm or enquiring interest in the subject. As regards to the bureaucratic or Editorial barriers, well, you occasionally find yourself wanting to write about one thing and they want to hear about something else, but I mean I think you've got to almost take that as part and parcel of it. You've got to work within the framework of what they want, if they don't want it there's not much point in you giving it to them. So, it's a commercial transaction.

Was there an increase in the amount of paperwork you had to do?

VAT, pretty horrible. We had to be on VAT for quite a long time, not any more to be honest, which is a absolutely horrendous waste of time. You had to go through all this stuff, but I'm not remarkable in that sense and the threshold went up at some point and I dropped out of it so I was absolutely delighted with that. But paperwork... expenses I suppose, you had to fill in your expenses form.

I'm just wondering if there were any external controls or if anything changed?

Not really I don't think, to be honest it's hard to convey it, it's like a real, just a pall mall rush from start to finish. I mean once you get on board, once you're lucky enough to get the job, which is very ad hoc as I say, it's just 'can you do this, can you do that, can you do the other thing'. As soon as you demonstrate an ability to do it, they just lock on to you and they just want you to do everything. And I remember the first three or four years it was just totally non stop and it was a big effort just finding time to get expenses in. So for years I never put any in because I didn't get round to do it. It's that kind of job where, it's hard to explain it really, where you're not really motivated like a normal job you're in a bit of scramble for stories, and a bit of scramble to be doing it all. You have to do everything for yourself. Again that's changed now, I know writers who have personal assistants, people who sort out their interviews, sort out their record reviews and even transcribe their tapes, I mean there's a woman, Chrissy Iley, who writes for a lot of magazines who does that. She has a PA who does all these things for her and as a result she does a lot more work. Going back to your barriers question, there's an awful lot of chasing up PR's, trying to get hold of records on time to review them

because the newspaper wants it the day before it comes out, so you have to get an advance copy the week before and try to ensure you have enough time to hear it. So it's constant forward planning, chasing PR's, trying to get tickets for shows. I mean quite often they're reluctant to give you tickets for shows, it's because maybe they're not bothered about publicising it, maybe they're worried they'll get a bad review or maybe the group is being tight fisted and they haven't given them any free ones to give out, I mean, any number of reasons. So you have to really pester people. It's not so bad at *The Times* but for smaller papers and magazines it's really difficult even getting into gigs and then you've got, in terms of setting up interviews, all the too-ing and fro-ing, 'would you be interested?', 'well I'll find out if the paper is interested', 'is the paper interested?', 'well what's he got to offer? Why does he want to do it now?' So you end up doing lots of administration and just fixing things up. You don't have any secretarial power, not secretarial, that sounds old fashioned, but no personal assistant.

I would have expected the broadsheet to have helped in some way, so they don't?

No, no. It's as much as you can do to get them to send out a letter on headed paper sometimes. Glastonbury is always a nightmare, they always make it as difficult as they possibly can for you to get accreditation for Glastonbury because everyone tries it on. So they have to have like a triplicate application, your Editor has to sign an affidavit virtually saying you're going to be writing about the festival for the paper, and even to get them to do that is quite hard. They say 'we'll get the PA to sort it out' and then you phone up two days later and she still hasn't done it. Again in the 1980s, I think the opera people and the classical people maybe had a bit more help because the Editor in the office would have his secretary obviously, so she would make sure he was sorted out. But we had to do all our own stuff. I think you'll find all critics were dealing directly with the PR's and making their own arrangements for everything. Quite often if you were going out of town you had to make all your own travel arrangements, they wouldn't sort that out. Sometimes you'd get help from the record company, they might do it. (43m38)

To what extent were you able to shape the Editorial content?

To a big extent, certainly at that point, but within certain constraints. So you knew that if you started promoting all your favourite weird little groups, sooner or later they would pick up on it pretty fast because although they didn't know much about it, and they trusted you to do it, you still had to do the job right, you had to self impose restraint. Strangely enough, you mentioned that little A to Z series I did, I remember plugging away at it week after week, it was quite a methodical plodding sort of job that just went on, and I remember at one point there was a group I really liked called Green on Red and I hadn't really listed them in the first place and I hadn't said anything about them and I got to G and I just thought I've got to put them in, no-one's going to pay any attention. Anyway, I filed it and literally within an hour I got a call back 'what's this Green on Red, what are they doing in there?' and you think the thing had just been ticking on without any comment whatsoever and that's when you suddenly realise that if you make a mistake or if anything goes wrong, you never heard from them when it's all going right, but as soon as you do something wrong you going you get a huge deluge of people pointing it out.

Does feedback from readers just go to you or does it go to the Editor?

Usually it gets passed straight on, usually you get it pretty much straight through.

So if I wrote to *The Times* saying I disagreed with something you've written it would go straight to you?

No, it would go to the letters Editor, if that's where you sent it. If you sent it for me for my attention on the arts page then obviously it would come straight to me. But if it goes to them they would log it and make some judgement as to whether they were going to print it and then they would pass it on. (46m37)

Did your Editor ever speak to you on a regular, maybe annual, basis to provide you with any feedback?

No, it was quite a depressing aspect of it actually for a while, I thought. In the 80s I never got any feedback at all from Editorial. I mean occasionally someone would have a little word of encouragement but only ever 'en passant'. I don't know quite what it is, I think part of it is just the sheer speed and the busyness of it all, there's no sentimentality about it. It's not a business that runs like that at all and you're just expected to get on with it and if it's going in the paper it's good enough and if it isn't it's not good enough, and that's pretty much the extent of the feedback you get. So it's quite brutal in that sense, and they know there's any number of other people who'll do it if you're not happy, and you know that too. But for a while you wonder if it's making any sense at all to be honest. Obviously I've been doing it for a very long time now so I feel a bit more confident, but not that much

to be honest and you're always slightly waiting for that call that Geoff Brown got telling him that he was no longer the film critic because he made the wrong call once too often. So, no. You get a Christmas card from the Editor once a year, that seems to be a tradition which is held good, but I always think if the Christmas card comes I suppose that means that, you know. But I've seen five or six Editors at *The Times* come and go, let alone Arts Editors, so you get a little bit immune to it after while. Peter Stoddard, one of the Editors in the 1980s, was the only Editor who actually invited me to go into his office and have a talk with him for a while, and that was about an article I'd written about Radiohead. He said 'we must have a talk, come on in and bring me some records you're listening to', and I went to his office and just sat there for about 40 minutes, it was surreal actually, we just talked about, I don't know, I can't even remember, he liked Madonna, he liked Radiohead and his daughter liked something else and son liked something else. And that's the only Editor I've had a kind of formal meeting with. (49m57)

Did the Editors ever get all of the music writers in one room together to say 'hey we're thinking of doing a new supplement or a new music page what do we think guys'? No.

No involvement in the decision making process around perhaps a big new shift?

No. Those decisions are always totally handed down from the Editorial people and I think they don't even let the big name writers know too much about those kind of things. I think it's a territorial thing, or a proprietorial thing, you know, we write, they edit and there's a big resistance to the idea of encouraging writers to think that they can be Editors or be involved in the editing process.

So the writers, despite their obvious creative edge, are not involved in any kind of decision making, not even where using their creative thinking skills might lead to some benefit?

You'd think that wouldn't you. Maybe informally, maybe some of the bigger names that are in the office more, but certainly none of the freelance people that are out and about like me. We would never be consulted. It's only once in a blue moon that we ever have any meetings of any sort. There's the Christmas bash, which has pretty much fallen by the wayside with *The Times*, I mean I don't know if it's the same with others, it's now a big departmental thing, it's a huge kind of features, i.e. the whole of T2, like a big works Christmas thing, which is boring and where no one really does anything.

But two or three weeks ago, we had a first critics lunch. It's very hard to get them all together in an evening, because of the nature of the job, everyone's always out. So we had lunch up at a place in Covent Garden, about twelve of us I think, Benedict Nightingale, Sam Marlow, Hilary Finch, Richard Morrisson, Deborah Crane, Pete Paphides, who does a lot of rock stuff now, Lisa Vericho does a lot of rock stuff, myself and I think Geoff Brown was there, who after he got the bullet from the film role became a classical writer. He has demonstrated great resilience it seems to me. Who else? I think that's about it, oh yes and Clive Davis was there, the jazz critic. This was convened by Deborah Crane who is the First Night reviews Editor and sort of overseen by Alex O'Connell who is the Arts Editor, and we had our lunch and everyone chatted and reminded themselves of what everyone else looked like and it was quite convivial. But nothing was ever said really about the shape of the paper or the direction of the paper, that's pretty much skirted around. A few old scores were kind of vaguely, not settled, but certainly referred to. Lisa had a big bee in her bonnet and tackled Alex over it and probably felt better about having had an opportunity to say it.

I was going to ask you about conflict – what was the most common source of conflict and how was it resolved? (53m53)

Well I suppose in my little world, my very small section of it, I suppose the biggest source of conflict related to whose going to do what, I suppose. With different rock and pop writers? There's that, yes. I've always been in a pretty advantageous position though because I've been there for so long, so I do have a bit more say in it, or have done. Back in those days, I suppose Richard Williams might have wanted to go and review Bruce Springsteen, I remember I said 'well actually I'm going to review Bruce Springsteen', and he was pretty fed up about that. And I did review Bruce Springsteen and he then very pointedly went and reviewed him six weeks later which was highly unusual. You didn't review the same person within six weeks, not in a broadsheet, but they might do that in *NME*. So yes, that kind of thing. Then more recently I was pulled off doing Live 8 because the Arts Editor decided Pete Paphides should do it and I was pretty pissed off about that. That I suppose would be an area of conflict in which the resolution is simply to do what the Arts Editor says. It's laid down by the Arts Editor. It's very hierarchical. If you have any sort of dispute or any sort of argument with an Arts Editor or even a deputy Arts Editor, let alone *the* Editor there is only one possible resolution, and that is

that you do whatever they want you to do, or else you can take a hike. And that extends to just about any aspect of it. (56m09)

Quite early on I was astonished to discover what they expected of you. They'd phone you up on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, this happened to me once, they said 'we need you to write 400 words for the newspaper about something that happened yesterday', you know, someone who died yesterday, 'and we need it by 2 o'clock, you've got to do it'. And I told one of these guys once, who was quite high up, I said 'no, sorry I'm going out to play tennis, can't do it'. And he went totally ballistic, 'who do you think you are, who do you think you're talking to' etc. etc. It was such a tirade. I spoke to my actual Arts Editor about it and she said 'well he can make sure you never write for the paper again if you really do cross him, if you really don't do what he wants, I would do it'. But if he'd got my answer phone, if I had an answer phone, it would have been...anyway, so you really learn a few survival tricks. So another time if I want to go and play tennis on a Sunday morning I make sure I leave the answer phone on and now you've got your mobile of course so you have to watch that one as well. (57m39)

And another time I did a similar thing. I actually said, which was absolutely true, that I had to write a piece for *Rolling Stone* that very day, you know, I had a really big piece I was writing that had to be finished by later on that day, and they wanted me to write something, and I said 'no I simply can't'. You see the newspaper people, something happens maybe the night before, they have a meeting at 10 o'clock in the morning to decide what they're going to do for tomorrow's paper, then they decide 'ah we'll get Sinclair to write something about that', a little column explaining why that's important, and they want it by 3 o'clock. So they come out of their conference at 11 am and they phone you at about quarter past, or half past and say 'can you do 1000 words on...'. I remember one example, 'John Peel said the White Stripes are the greatest thing since Jimi Hendrix, so we need to have a 1000 word piece about the White Stripes by 4 o'clock' ' (That day?) yes that day, 'can you get hold of John Peel and get him to expand on that'. Well if you've got any other plans for that day you can forget it, this is what's expected of you. (58m59)

I don't suppose there's anyone that you can go to if you feel that you are being treated unfairly, you don't have like a line manager and you don't have a HR department. So you're on your own really unless you're in a union or unless there's a complaints procedure?

No, I think that's true. There could be, I mean you might find other people have different perspectives on it, but that's certainly been my experience. And certainly at that time, in those days, you just have to get on and do it really. (59m55)

Part B

So, you've already answered my first question which was 'were you freelance?'

Freelance, always freelance. (1h27m00)

So were you also freelance for *The Independent* as well?

Freelance for everybody, freelance occasional pieces for everybody, you know *The Times* literary supplement, but that's because I've been around for a long time. I wouldn't say I've freelanced for *The Independent*, I've sold them a couple of pieces, the same for *The Spectator* or the *New Statesman*.

So you don't feel particularly attached to one publication?

The Observer I've been with for 30 years but that's because they ask me and I also write obituaries for *The Daily Telegraph* and have done for about the last ten years, but once again that's because they ask me. (1h28m00)

So how were you first approached to write for *The Observer* or even *The Independent* for that matter?
The Independent was because I met Michael Church at a party and I told him about this and he said 'oh, alright', and that's how it went, you know. But *The Observer*, I got a phone call from John Lucas, who was the Arts Editor in those days, and he said 'I've seen a piece that you wrote for the *New Statesman*' which was a review of a book about the Beatles, and he said 'how would you feel about writing some occasional pieces for *The Observer* about pop music?' And I said 'well I'm not really an expert in it, I just sort of take an interest in things'. The upshot of it was that he and Terence Kilmartin and I went out to lunch and at the end of it I had agreed to write some pieces for *The Observer* and that's really it. It was never really formalised. I've asked other people on other papers from time to time what their arrangements are and they vary. Some of them have had the thing formalised, they've had some kind of contract drawn up. Some people have had, I don't know any, but I think it happens in some of the other areas, they're paid a sort of retainer. I couldn't speak for them because I don't know but I should imagine that somebody like Philip French is probably on a retainer, he'd get a retainer plus fees I should imagine to stop him going somewhere else. So he's not allowed to write for anyone else? Well not about films, because you don't see him writing about films for anyone else. But I've guessed that one. On one occasion [Tony Russell] did say to me, 'I'm sorry to see that you're writing for *The Times* and the *Jazz Magazine*', and I said 'are we talking about retainers?' and he said 'no', and that was the end of that.

So for *The Observer* you were just asked to....

I was asked to do it because of the thing that I'd written in the *New Statesman*.

So there was no trial period or anything?

No. They just said 'can you do something for next week', and I didn't know what to do. He said 'can you do something for next week', I said 'well what?' he said 'well I don't know', because in those days popular music wasn't such as it is now. I said 'how about if I go out and buy the top ten, I'll get the *Melody Maker* find out what the top ten is and write a piece about it?', they said 'yes'. So I did, I went out and bought the top ten and wrote a piece about it. That's where it started really. But I used to do things like the Eurovision Song Contest, that's always good for a laugh. I mean the point about that, I always said, was why do our best songwriters never write for the Eurovision Song Contest? McCartney doesn't write for the Eurovision Song Contest, Ray Davies doesn't write for the Eurovision Song Contest.

So it was through somebody you knew, and for *The Independent* you met Michael Church.

Michael Church was for a while the Arts Editor of *The Independent* or maybe he was the Assistant Features Editor. I don't know what he was. He let me write a couple of pieces for him anyway. All these things happen like that. I have never met anybody who has applied for a job.

I was going to ask if you had to go for an interview or submit a portfolio, but it sounds like they'd been researching you anyway and watching your writing?

I think he'd seen it in this paper and he thought this is somebody who could write a bit and somebody who would fit and who obviously isn't attached. They have to be ever so careful not to get someone with a bee in their bonnet. You get people with bees in their bonnet. They have to get somebody who, for a general newspaper, has a balanced view of things otherwise you get, well I mean, this is perhaps something that could perhaps be treated as confidential, Tony Palmer was before me, he had fingers in a lot of pies, he used to make bits of film and bits for television and he was getting far too close to mixing up his business of making promotional films with his business of writing for the newspaper and so they really felt that they really couldn't go on with Tony Palmer but at the same time they looked around at the music press such as it was in 1974 and they couldn't think what to do. And they saw this review and they thought this is somebody who isn't part of that sort of pop music establishment and when we went out for that lunch they did ask quite a lot of questions about me like 'what do you do and how do you go about it?', that kind of thing. (1h34m55)

Did they want to know about your qualifications or your experience?

They said 'what do you know about pop?' and I said 'well I've been a musician since I was a kid', and I was teaching at the time and I was playing and things like that so they asked 'what other writing have you done?' and I said 'only bits for music magazines'. I'd never considered myself to be a writer, I just did it because I was asked. I said that I had a certain amount of practical knowledge because I'd seen it from the worms eye view. So they knew you were a performer yourself? They knew I was doing that sort of thing. I'd worked with some people they'd heard of. Obviously they were happy because they've continued.

So what criteria do you think they were they looking for?

They wanted somebody who wasn't too close. They wanted somebody who could take a fairly detached view, and also someone who could write fairly light, and moderately humorously. I think Terence Kilmartin was particularly keen not to have some pop bore, he said 'I hope you are not one of these pop bores?'

In terms of reward, you've said that you'd get commissioned to write pieces of work. Back then if you were commissioned to write something and it didn't appear, did you still get paid?

The NUJ, of which I'm no longer a member, I'm a member of the Society of Authors now which is far more useful, they all subscribed to these things, had a set of rates. If you were commissioned to write something and it doesn't appear for reasons which are beyond your control, if it's terribly duff, and just no good, and they don't want it then that's a different story, but if it doesn't appear, although they definitely commissioned it, you would get what's called a kill fee which is usually a third, or possibly a half, of the original of what you would have otherwise got.

So the rates for work that didn't get published were set by the NUJ?

The NUJ promulgated rates but that doesn't mean to say they had to stick to them. The national newspapers probably paid more than the NUJ rates. I don't know whether the NUJ have rates anymore because trade unions can't actually, because once trade unions could no longer control entry then they no longer could police anything. If they couldn't control entry, that means that they couldn't keep people out, so anybody can get into. It happened with Equity, it happened with all of them. Once it was extremely difficult to get into the NUJ, and difficult to get into Equity and difficult to get into these things. One of the things the Thatcher government did of course was to put a stop to that, with the result that the unions lost all their ability to do things like police their rates of pay. They couldn't strike without going through a whole palaver and performance and they couldn't chuck people out, and they couldn't stop people coming in.

So were the NUJ involved with the recruitment of journalists?

I think you had to be a member before you could, no, that wasn't the case because they let me in. I wasn't in the NUJ when I started, and I joined the NUJ in 1976. And subsequently I went on an NUJ sub Editors course. I became an accredited sub Editor because the NUJ used to run courses, and I went to Bristol Polytechnic and I did a sub Editors course, and somewhere there's a bit of paper saying I'm a qualified sub Editor.

So if the unions were deregulated during the 1980s, they were no longer able to influence the recruitment of people who were on the staff at the newspapers?

Absolutely. You couldn't be on the staff without being a member of one of the unions. You couldn't work on the newspapers, although it depends what you did. All the print unions, of which there were many, all of whom had a different job. I can't remember what they're all called now, The NGA, NATSOPA, all those. They all had different jobs and then there was the NUJ which was for the writers, for the journalists. And that's why if you wanted to get a piece of paper from one side of the office to the other you had to whistle up a NATSOPA member who was a messenger to take it. It was unbelievable. You would not believe it. A friend of mine, I've met subsequently, used to work on *The Sunday Times*, he could go on for hours about the nonsense. They were always having to have meetings in order to avert a crisis, every week there'd be a crisis. (1h42m56)

OK, I might go back and look at the old NUJ records regarding how they set the rates of pay.

There were NUJ freelance rates because they had a freelance branch. The NUJ had branches in the main papers, they called them chapels, but they were branches. But there was also a freelance chapel for freelancers from outside and there was a rate for them. I think that they paid rather more, *The Observer*, and things like that, more than the NUJ rate for freelancers. But it's a long time ago. I think John Lucas said they'd pay however much it was for a number of words. And I looked wise, because I didn't know, and he said 'that's quite good actually'.

So the NUJ had a base rate, and the papers had to pay at least that?

I think it varied, I think local papers were different.

Do you know if freelancers got the same rate of pay as the staff journalists?

We would be paid on a different basis so it would be hard to tell. If you're working and being paid as being paid a monthly salary it's not the same thing, because if you're a freelance you get paid for what's called lineage, paid by the amount that they use. Either that or they ask you to do, nowadays they're much, much closer to knowing what they want, so they'll say 500 words and they mean 500 words. But otherwise people used to write a little bit over the top just in case. My friend Max Jones who was the longest serving member of the *Melody Maker* staff said 'always put a bit in there for the subs to take out dear boy, that's what you do. Always leave a bit for the subs to take out'.

As far as you're aware, did music journalists receive similar remuneration packages irrespective of the genre that they covered? You said about classical and opera being at the top of the hierarchy.

They may have been on sort of contract. The very grand classical journalist, Edward Greenfield, I've got a feeling that people like that would probably have had some sort of contract. They probably had some sort of perks but I wouldn't know. There were all sorts of other things, although I arrived after it was all over really. But they say that in the late 60s and very early 70s, the amount of freebies flying about at that time was absolutely unbelievable. When I got there, there were still quite a few freebies flying about but they weren't the sort of things that had been going around. But I mean publicists would put together these trips to places. I went all over the United States doing various things, I went to Japan, all sorts of extraordinary places. (1h47m58)

And do you think that sort of thing applied to music writers from all genres or did the classical writers get more freebies?

They would have gone to Milan and the Metropolitan Opera. And the pop writers maybe didn't do so well? I went and did a thing from Nashville and I went to Oklahoma, the Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Which doesn't sound like a lot but it was fantastic. Where all those old Hank Williams type of people used to play. They were still there, there were still people like that there. (1h49m04)

So it wasn't just the classical writers. Do you think on balance they had more of those things?

I don't know. After a while it got silly because, I don't mind, I'd be quite happy to go but you have to be very careful and probe to make sure that they are not expecting you to deliver something specific, because if they are then don't go near it. And if they're going to want to have, sort of commissioning letters and stuff like that then don't touch it. I would say to anybody starting out, if they want something specific don't go near it, because they're trying to buy you.

So it was the publicists arranging these trips, it wasn't *The Observer* saying we'll pay for you to go over to Nashville?

No they never have. They pay expenses in the UK quite happily if you want to go somewhere else. I used to go and hear people out of town quite a lot, partly because of the timing for a Sunday paper, it's sometimes difficult to catch them, and sometimes it would just be a good place to hear someone so you'd go there. They were very good like that in those days, they'd take care of that, they'd stump up the expenses and the hotel. But other, things abroad, all those are too expensive for the paper. Record companies would do it, people who are handling publicity for all sorts of, I don't know, agents and all sorts. But you have to be careful that they weren't expecting to have a specific thing.

So you'd check in advance if you had a free hand?

I'd say 'well I'm not making any promises you know', and they might start um-ing and ah-ing and in which case I'd say forget it. No promises.

My next question was going to be 'did the way that you were rewarded affect your creative output in any way?' but from what you're saying you'd stick to your guns.

Never try pay out things like that, you just get into a complete quagmire. So for you it was more important to remain detached? Yes, so for example somebody said a few years ago, Detroit. I don't know if they were handling PR for Detroit or something, home of Motown and all that kind of thing, and I said 'well I'm not all that keen and not all that crazy about travelling, but what exactly is it?'. When it all came out basically what they wanted was a cast iron commission that someone was going to write a big feature in a national newspaper about Detroit. They didn't want to leave anything to chance. So I said no. But you do get that kind of thing.

The broadsheets themselves, did they offer you any kind of long term rewards? You've mentioned that sometimes they might have offered some journalists retainers, but did they offer anything else to keep you tied in? No. So was it just having a good relationship with them that kept you going back? That's right. That's exactly it. They said they'd keep the door open and the room warm.

Some people talk about reward being just something as simple as people saying 'we really like your writing', or 'you're doing a great job'. Did you ever get any non-financial rewards, anything like that? Yes, you come across people who appreciate what you do, and people do write to you. The Editors as well? Some of them are good. *The Observer* have never been particularly good at that although I must say that John Lucas was very good. *The Daily Telegraph* are excellent at that, they really are good, they write little notes if they like something, you get a little note saying thank you so much for doing that. The only person I've ever known do that at *The Observer* was the Literary Editor that followed Kilmartin, [Michael Ratcliffe], and he used to send a little note if he really enjoyed something or a little post card saying 'thanks very much I really enjoyed that'. But he was the exception rather than the rule? Yes the exception rather than the rule. (1h55m29)

And I'm guessing no pension?

No because you're self employed, you know, you do your own tax and your own whatever it is.

You mentioned about the training course with the NUJ, but did *The Observer* or *The Independent* ever say that if you fancy going to a conference or training course they would fund it?

They may have done. I don't know. When I did the NUJ subs course, I was working at the time for the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) as the Executive Editor of their publication unit, and with the introduction of the new technology they said 'we're going to have to do a lot more of the work in house now rather than put it out to typesetters, a whole lot of the stuff has to be done here'. So they said 'how would you feel about going on this course, for which we will pay?' So I said 'yes'. It was very interesting actually and I'm glad I did it. The ILEA paid for it.

But the broadsheets wouldn't have because you were freelance?

I don't think they would have done. They didn't really come up with those sort of things, they'd expect it to come from somewhere else.

Did they ever check up on you to see if you were keeping your membership to professional bodies up to date?

No they didn't, they didn't say anything about that. When it was absolutely necessary for people to be in the NUJ, and I wasn't to begin with. I think they said that in these specialist areas it's very often a

different matter. But I did join anyway because I wanted to be doing more writing. So I joined in 1976. I needed to be then because I started working for the IL EA. When we moved to Chelsea Bridge House we had to be shown how to operate the technology so they had a chap there called John Hunt who showed us how to work the system and if you couldn't work it you had to send for him. I used to go in and actually write the piece in there for a while because it was just convenient to do it like that, but if something didn't work you'd send for this chap and he'd say 'this is what you do'. So you learned on the job. Everybody had the training because you had to know how to operate the system.

So if you wanted to develop yourself professionally in any way it was completely up to you how you did that?

Up to you, yes.

What options were available to you then if you wanted to develop your professional skills? Was anything available to you?

There may have been.

You mentioned that the NUJ had different courses

The NUJ had courses on a lot of things, I can't tell you what they all were, but they had basic reporters courses and all that. Because the way people became journalist in the old days was they'd go and work on a local newspaper and then they would work their way up. So first of all they'd be reporting on funerals or whatever it was, and from day one they were members of the NUJ. The way in which they learned other skills was to go on NUJ courses which were very cheap for members. These were like basic reporters courses, there were subs courses, there were probably various editing courses. I think I've seen those. I think they still run them now. It's the sort of thing that unions do because it helps them keep their presence now, by doing things like that. So acting as a central body providing all the training? Exactly

So how would you say, during that period, that you maintained, or developed your creative edge? Where was that coming from, where were your external stimuli, was it some sort of training event or conferences, were you reading other peoples work? Where did the creativity come from if you like? From inside me. You notice what goes on and you read things and stuff like that, but I wasn't aware that I was getting it.

So absorbing stuff that you were reading?

I may have been, I may have been.

It wasn't an active decision to go and learn?

There were a few people that I admired and I would pay attention to them, Peter Clayton being one. But most of the time, no.

The only other question I have then, is what was the most common source of conflict within your professional environment and how were conflicts typically resolved, thinking again of the period 1981 to 1991?

It was trying to second guess people. When the person in charge changed, the time when you had the problems was when you got a new Arts Editor in. There were a number of fairly rapid changes around that period and just afterwards. We had a guy called Nicholas Wapshot who became the Arts Editor and he was the exact opposite [of John Lucas], he was on his way up in the world and keen to make a change. He wanted everything different. So all of a sudden everything had to be done in a different way and he'd rather have a lot of little pieces than one big piece. And it was just trying to second guess the way he wanted things because they'd never know what they wanted unless they found something they didn't like. And then he left to go to the New York office. And we had Gillian Widdicombe, who was a difficult person. There's no other way of describing her. She was a difficult person. She was mercurial and you never knew what she was going to take exception to. You just didn't know. She married Jeremy Isaacs, the guy who used to run Channel 4, and became Lady Isaacs, and left us I'm happy to say. The ones after that were much more ordinary, eyes down get on and do it, unimaginative but efficient people.

So when a new Editor came in did they ever get all of their arts writers together in one room and say 'hello I'm your new Arts Editor and this is where I see the paper going and what do you think?'

I wish they had really, it would have been better if they did. They tended not to. There was a time when we had an interregnum and that was when Gillian Widdicombe left and they didn't have an Arts Editor for a bit, and the job was being done by, I can't remember his name, writes about opera in *The Telegraph* [Rupert Christiansen]. Anyway, he was doing it under protest because he happened to be there at the time. He said 'I'm not the Editor I'm just putting stuff together'. At that time there was no Arts Editor really. The Features Editor kept an eye on it, but basically that was just allocating space, and that was it really. It stumbled along reasonably well. That was the time we had this thing about Dizzy Gillespie's obituary, because nobody wanted to take charge and make a decision. The extraordinary thing is that a national newspaper can run for some months without actually having anyone in charge of the arts pages at all. I don't know why it took them so long but they finally sort of settled and then the woman they got left quite soon afterwards and they got another one. It was very strange. (2h08m01)

So there was very little in the way of pulling all the music or all the arts writers together?

Some papers do and some papers don't. I'm told that *The Guardian* tends to. There was a time when the Editor, one of the many Editors, the Editor at the top changes quite a lot at the newspapers you know, decided that he was going to have weekly or monthly or something or other, all the arts writers in a meeting to discuss matters and it seemed like a complete waste of time because it was all right if, well it wasn't a lot of good to me, because I just said well I've got this and I've got that, and they'd say 'Oh I see all right'. And then it all got silly and I didn't want to go all the way up to Farringdon to sit around for a couple of hours in the morning in this office, but gradually that just fell apart because people couldn't be bothered.

I can understand that they might want to do it maybe if they were launching a new music magazine perhaps?

When they do something big like that they don't tell you. This Berliner thing and all the changes that followed from it were very casually passed on.

Although I can't cite any examples, I've noticed that some newspapers suddenly seemed to shift their emphasis and create a rock and pop page or a new media page. I would just assume that all the people who were regularly contributing to that would have been pulled together and consulted and asked 'what do you think' and 'what are your ideas on this'?

They said we're going to have a redesign, and whenever they're going to have a redesign it entails less space, it seems to me. So they had a redesign and a few months after the redesign hey presto Berliner happened. They told us about the redesign but they didn't tell me about the change until about a couple of weeks before it happened, not that it made any difference, but it would have been nice to have been told or even sent a letter.

So they never say 'this is how we're going to change and this is how it will affect you?'

They won't say when they're going to make a big change. They can say we're going to have a redesign. I'll say 'when?' and they'll say 'well it'll happen when it happens'. Because they don't want it to get out so that other papers run a spoil on that day. But everybody knew that Berliner was coming, they had to know that, because you have to order different size paper for a start.

So the most common source of conflict was when new people came in and you were trying to second guess what they wanted?

Yes. So they always say 'well why didn't you?' And that was Gillian Widdicombe's favourite. She'd say 'do so and so', you'd say 'OK' and then she'd say 'well I thought you were going to'. I'd say 'well why didn't you say'. A communication issue then? Yes a communication issue. She was a very difficult person, Lady Isaacs as now is. (2h13m05)

Note

[] Indicates text added after the transcription was reviewed by the interviewee.

The Reduction of 'Popular' Music Coverage

[DG] "... what happens is the press isn't actually reflecting what really happens at all, it's reflecting what publicity tells them is happening. Because they all write about each other in this incestuous kind of way, whereas with an aging population there are thousands of people who actually like something completely different, millions of people not in the faintest bit interested in all this (pop music), and nobody takes any notice. I remember Stacey Kent said to me... you'd turn up at what looked like a leisure centre at Welwyn Garden City and she'd think there was going to be nobody there and she'd walk in and there'd be a hall full of people, all around about fifty years old and that was their night out and that's what they wanted, and that's great; and then she realised that it wasn't just there, it was all over the country, and then she discovered it's all over Europe as well."

[DG] "I always used to do the Sinatra concerts. I wanted to go myself anyway, but they were such huge events some of them and you couldn't ignore things like that."

Engagement of Regional Music Critics at *The Independent*

[FM] “the other broadsheets tended to have one or two or three critics, I think *The Financial Times* at that time had seven or eight critics, it’s interesting, they had a huge number, I don’t know whether they were all on contract, and ‘the critic’ would be sent to Manchester or to Birmingham or Liverpool or to Glasgow or Edinburgh to sort of look around, report, and come back again. I felt quite strongly that there should be regional reviewers. I think there are arguments for and against that but it was important that we had a regional voice and we had to some extent the luxury of, not always enough space, but a willingness to think that it was important to review a concert from Liverpool or important to review a concert from Birmingham, it might only be one or two a month, but we had ‘our man’ there, in fact there weren’t really ‘our women’ it was mainly ‘our man’, in those regional centres...apart from anything else *The Independent* paid its own way, it didn’t accept free trips so it couldn’t necessarily afford to pay for critics to travel to these places. The obverse of that is that the place in question, Liverpool or Birmingham or wherever, may have felt that they wanted the main critic to come and see what they were up to rather than the local critic just reporting back, they’d quite liked to have had a visit, so it works both ways. But it was definitely different and it created a lot of voices within the paper”

[MO] “... the radicalism resided more in the way they made their internal arrangements, like this idea of not having such a hierarchy, having more loose ranging coverage and that probably... had a financial basis, they were trying to do it as ‘on the cheap’ as they could. But there was a sort of thought that creating pundits wasn’t a particularly noble thing to be doing, it was better to have a lively array of different styles, so that was quite different from the other papers.”

[MO] “...they appointed Bayan Northcott as a sort of main music critic (but) (t)hey always had a different policy from the other papers; I think right from the start they just wanted to have an occasional bunch of music critics, they weren’t really trying to build anyone’s profile in particular. They kept it very loose and they just had freelancers. But they did have Bayan as ‘on salary’ I think.”

Newspaper Production Practices Prior to the Computerisation of the Newspaper Industry

[BN] “(at) *The Sunday Telegraph* which I’d worked for ten years as their Chief Critic, or their only critic, I had a column every week, had a Features Editor, but it had no Arts Editor and one was told, ‘well you’ve got 1000 words this week’ and providing one turned up on Friday morning with one’s copy one was left completely free to cover what one thought was important. If one went back in the afternoon the proofs were there, they’d come up from the stone, the print shop, which was under the offices that were in Fleet Street and you would then find (out) what the space actually was because advertisements would still have been coming in that day, and you would then cut the galley to fit the space and re-word and so forth. It was still set with hot metal, can you believe it, linotype machines, this is still in the early 1980s, you would go down to the print shop and there were these printers sitting at these antique machines with their little pots of boiling lead and each line of the text was cast as a lead slide and they were fitted in boxes and the galley was drawn off this as they’d been printing papers for decades. So one developed extraordinary skills because if you had to lose seventeen lines you got very good at extracting adjectives from near the end of paragraphs so the fewest number of slides had to be re-cast. Of course once computer setting came in this was a totally useless skill but this was something that we got to a fine art for a time.”

[DS] “...When I started at *The Times* you had to physically take a hard copy of your review to the building in Grays Inn Road by 9 o’clock the following morning...It was then set into hot metal by the printing guys who were highly unionised, highly disruptive and a bolshy bunch of people who didn’t make your life any easier at all. They set it in hot metal and if there was a problem, if it was too long for example, ...and *The Times* was better than most, sometimes they would just chop it off at the knees. Wherever they ran out of space that was it, and so the review might just get near the end then it would just stop”.

[RD] “The problem with *The Guardian* for many, many years... in the 1980s particularly, emails didn’t exist, the internet didn’t exist and they wanted concerts the next day, which they don’t so much now, it’s got much slower. So my main memory of the 1980s is going to concerts, hoping the thing is going to end on time because often it was far, far, far less controlled than it is now, they were much more chaotic and anarchic events, and then knowing you had to get a piece in by quarter to eleven, which is flippin early, running out of a hall, usually at about quarter past ten having ascertained where the nearest phone boxes are or chatted up the manager of the hall to use his office to phone things through, writing like mad and then, and of course you didn’t have word counts on emails or things like that so you had to work out with particular types of note book how many pages came to exactly what they

wanted because the words had to be right as well. Often rushing into a phone box kicking some poor hapless girl who is on the phone to her boyfriend off the phone saying 'this is urgent, this is urgent, this is urgent' once it got to nearing deadline and then collapsing into a pub afterwards for a drink... Though the problem was often you would miss the last chunk of the concert... there was a Clapton one once they did about two songs but they had the space so I had to rush off and do it, so one had a few problems like that. But it was all a lot more freewheeling than it is now. Now it's much, much more controlled and you have overnight to write it in and everyone knows what you are writing about and you have the internet and laptops and wi-fi and the rest of it and it's probably technically a lot easier. So one had the whole physical constraints of actually physically doing it and getting it across which were actually, at the time, as important as what you were actually writing."

The Negative Effects of Popular Music on Modern Day Society

[BN] "Up to the mid 20th century or early 20th century all folk music, popular music, vernacular music shall we say, music of the people, unsophisticated music and so on, was equally divided between duple and triple rhythm. There were, to put it basically, both marches and waltzes or whatever. Increasingly as the 20th century has gone on in popular music, duple time, i.e. 2/4 or 4/4, has squeezed out triple time altogether. When was the last time you can recall a hit that was not in duple time? In other words one of the two basic human metres has been driven out. Now why do I say this is sinister? Because triple time is flexible as we know from Strauss waltzes, you can pull it around but it's still in triple time. You can't do that with duple time because if you lengthen the upbeat it immediately turns in triple time. So it's all rigid downbeat, it's the sound of marching; and I think it's the sound of coercion and oppression. It masquerades and is sold as the music of youthful rebellion of course but it's the same absolute beat... But now the really interesting thing is... pop writing has grown to enormous proportions, there are whole conferences, there are vast areas of academic research and all the rest of it, and huge theories are spun about this that and the other. Never once have I heard or seen anybody refer to what this particular phenomenon, which is so obvious that everybody takes it for granted, they haven't noticed, that triple time has been driven out of popular music. Now what does this mean? I think it's a very, very sinister development because I think duple time is inherently, if it becomes obsessive and so on, is the beat of militarism. It's the beat of conformity of everybody marching together. It's the beat of rock. The mass meeting. I get a very queasy feeling when I see a Wembley Stadium crammed with young people, it puts me in the mind of a Nuremberg rally. Fortunately it's about something essentially trivial thank goodness, it's not about Hitler, but it may not always be."

Motivation and Backgrounds of Newspaper Music Critics

"There's always more people around wanting to do it than there are jobs, and there are all sorts of people. There are some who are in other branches of journalism who are music lovers who'd just like to do that, opera especially is very prone to those ones, you know they've been a Features Editor or something and they want to wind down at the end of their career and they say 'can I be the opera critic'. So there's the journalists who want to do it, and then there's all the people who've actually studied music for one reason for another and they're either being academics and they want to do something on the side or they're being performers or they're working in the BBC or whatever and maybe it's not going as fast or as far as they want and you know musicians tend to know each other, so it's all those things as well. I think newspapers won't normally take a gamble on a complete stranger."

"I'd bought the music papers and I was always interested in the idea that you got records for nothing when you reviewed records, I thought 'cor, they send you free copies of LPs, that's great'"

"Music criticism in this country is on a much more amateur basis. People who drifted into it were very often not musicians, not necessarily musically trained, although musically informed. They got into it because they fancied doing it, they knew people and so on, they were engaged on this sort of curious basis. I don't know if there is now, but I've never heard of any sort of academic training for music criticism or anything. No doubt tutors tell people how to write essays on works. Even in America I think there are schools of creative criticism, there's nothing like that here and in a funny way that sort of curious amateurism is both its weakness because... particularly in the old days when people evaluated everything according to their good taste old boy, you get sort of connoisseurship applied to whatever, you would get a great deal of prejudice perhaps involved in criticism. But on the other hand because there is no critics trades union, I mean there's a Critics Circle but I mean it's toothless, it's not a professionalised body like doctors or performing musicians and so on and so it's not a special interest group or a little closed society in that sense, it's just a rather motley group of individuals who have gone into this rather curious avenue of work because the opportunities are there and because it's something that interests them to do. Which does, or should do, if they were given space enough, guarantee a certain independence of outlook which should be valuable. They're not party liners unless they chose to align themselves to some aesthetic party line."

The Experience of a Female Critic Working in a Predominantly Male Profession

“(Did it feel like it was a bit of a boys club?) Oh definitely, absolutely. I felt quite alienated sometimes at various meetings, at the Critics Circle, it felt very much like a gentleman’s club. It was only through the kindness of particular already established male colleagues who made a point of including me and introducing me to others, largely at that time through bodies like the Critics Circle... because if you’d just go to a concert you don’t know who your fellow critics are if you haven’t been introduced, you wouldn’t recognise a single one of them... Whether it was traditionally because women didn’t like going home late at night because then, without the new technology you had to take your piece in physically, write it by quarter past eleven, wait for the Subs to knock it into shape or whatever, make sure that everything was OK, leave the building at midnight and start your journey home. Now maybe it was because women didn’t want that. But there was Joan Chissell who was the one person I looked at, but she was thought to be quite an exception and quite a sort of bluestocking. It was very much a man’s club in the early 1980s, definitely. ... I would go up to take my seat at the Festival Hall, where we always had the same seats and on more than one occasion a steward would come up to me and say ‘I’m sorry you can’t sit there that’s for *The Times* Critic’, now I’m sure that it’s because I was female, or maybe I was young and most of them were older. But it took a long while for people not to think I was pulling some sort of wool over their eyes when I went to collect press tickets, ‘oh’ you know I could see it in their face, ‘you can’t be *The Times* critic’ that was definitely a perception, and lots of people wrote to me ‘Dear Mr ... I mean it’s far less like that now but then definitely, you know, ‘you can’t be *The Times* critic because you’re a (woman)’ it’s not what they said but I knew it’s what they were thinking subconsciously.”

Interviewees Known to Have Been Oxbridge Educated

Critic	University	Subject studied (if known)	Source
Clive Davis	Oxford	Modern Languages	Interview & Internet ³³⁸
Robin Denselow	Oxford	English	Interview & Internet ³³⁹
Hilary Finch	Cambridge	Cert. Ed	Interview ³⁴⁰
Dave Gelly	Cambridge	English and Anthropology	Interview & Internet ³⁴¹
Nicholas Kenyon	Oxford	History	Internet ³⁴²
Bayan Northcott	Oxford	English	Interview & Internet ³⁴³
Robert Sandall	Oxford	English	Interview & Internet ³⁴⁴
Tom Sutcliffe	Oxford	English (plus a choral scholarship)	Interview & Internet ³⁴⁵

(N.B. Guardian Arts Editor Roger Alton was also Oxford educated, subject unknown³⁴⁶).

³³⁸ www.clivedavis.blogs.com/about.html. Accessed 01/08/2006.

³³⁹ www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/3094345.stm. Accessed 25/11/2005.

³⁴⁰ Plus an MA in Music and English from Exeter.

³⁴¹ www.jerryjazzmusician.com/mainHTML.cfm?page=gelly.html. Accessed 25/11/2005.

³⁴² www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/controllers/nicholas_kenyon.shtml. Accessed 25/11/2005.

³⁴³ www.stainer.co.uk/bayan/html. Accessed 25/11/2005.

³⁴⁴ www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/presenters/robert_sandall.shtml. Accessed 25/11/2005.

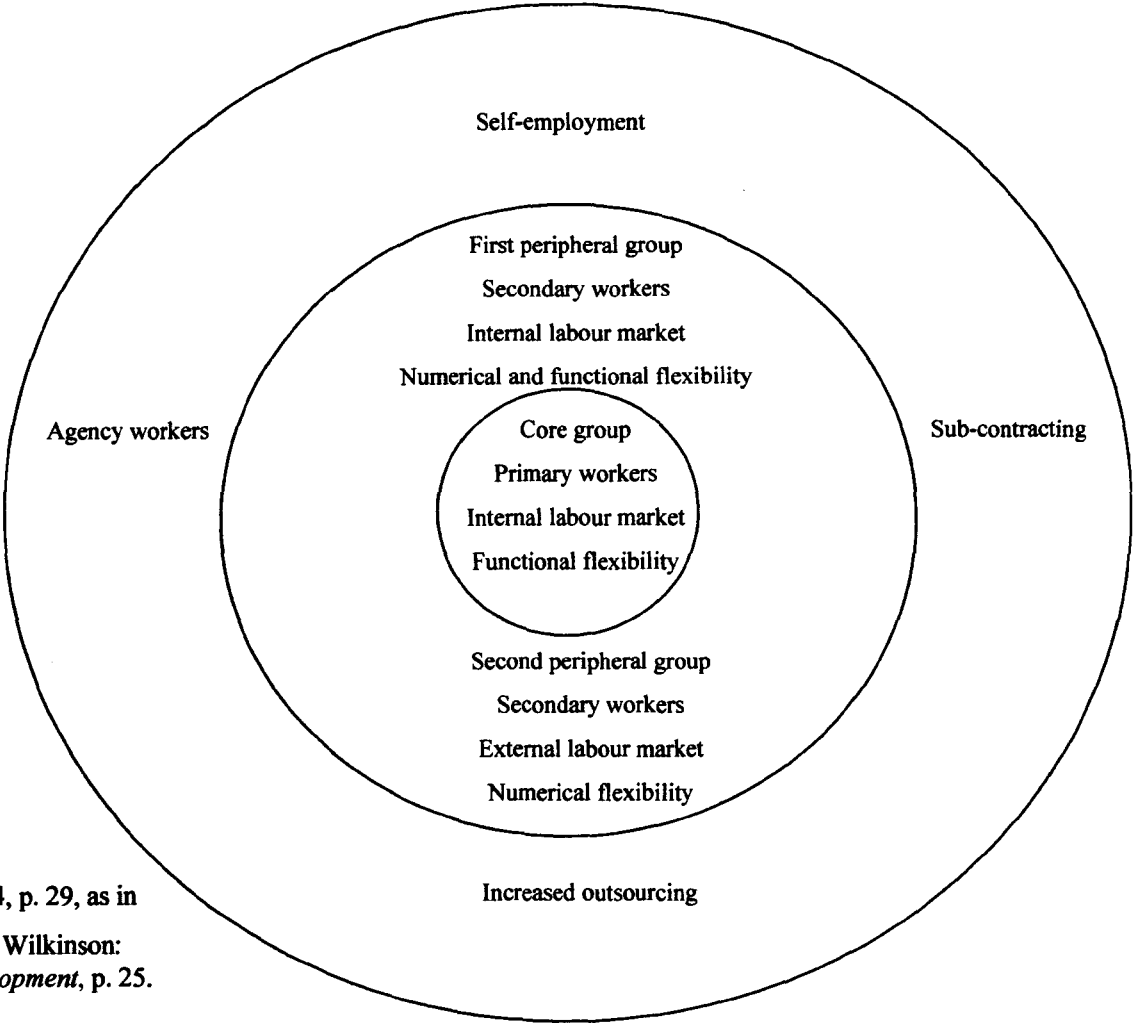
³⁴⁵ www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Sutcliffe-Tom.htm. Accessed 11/07/2006.

³⁴⁶ www.observer.guardian.co.uk/contacts/page/0,,329654,00.html. Accessed 07/08/2006.

Recruitment and Reward of Other Journalists

“(...so you said there were three people who were staff?) “It’s difficult to say. Throughout the 1980s, there was a northern music critic, that was Gerald Larner, there was Ted Greenfield. Then there were people with contracts. Philip Hope-Wallace was on staff in the 1970s until he died, and because he was on staff they had to keep him going... (And so staff were mostly drawn from the classical genre?) Absolutely, well they were entirely drawn from the classical genre. Robin Denselow was a freelance, John Fordham was a freelance, Ron Atkins was a freelance and so were most of the stringers down in Exeter and wherever they may have been, in the west country. Allan Sadler used to write endless reviews of theatre in the west country, and there were lots of freelancers up in the north. Gerald will fill you in on whether anybody else was on staff up north, I don’t think they were but they might have been. David Fallows and David Fanning were both writing reviews at that time up in the north, and David Fanning worked for Manchester, was a lecturer at the University as was David Fallows, they were both university lecturers and they’re both Professors I think now. But anyway, the fact is that they were writing for *The Guardian* regularly. Fanning might have had a contract of some sort. Now as far as *The Guardian* in the south was concerned, Meirion Bowen never had a contract but was always a freelance, but Hugo Cole definitely had a contract. When Hugo Cole gave up I think that was the point when much to my detriment Richard Gott, because I was on staff, but Richard Gott decided to offer the money and the contract that Hugo Cole had exercised to Hugh Canning which meant that I had Hugh breathing down my back the whole time for the next three years which was very disadvantageous for me in terms of my professional standing at *The Guardian*. But I can’t be sure what those arrangements were you’d need to go and check with somebody at the paper. (So no rock and pop people on contracts?) No rock people on contracts at all.”

The Flexible Firm



Adapted from J. Atkinson, 1984, p. 29, as in
Marchington, Mick and Adrian Wilkinson:
People Management and Development, p. 25.

Background Critical Framework Relating to the Rejection or Celebration of Popular Culture

In 1930, Leavis suggested that in any period, and in any place, a small minority exist who are capable of a superior standard of artistic judgement, and upon whom the greater majority depend to engage in the appreciation of art and literature; historically, he argued, “culture has always been in minority keeping”.³⁴⁷ Leavis proposed that without this minority the finest features of the present, and what he referred to as the “subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition,”³⁴⁸ would no longer be kept alive for the benefit of future generations. Yet by 1930 Leavis perceived that this elite minority was under threat, and that culture was “at a crisis”.³⁴⁹ The impending danger was, in Leavis’ opinion, brought about by the emergence of the machine and new technologies since they were altering the circumstances of daily life and social customs at a rate for which he could find no historical parallel. His fear was that in the rush towards the new customs and practices of everyday life, the finer elements of the past would be irrecoverably pushed aside, and that future generations would be unaware of their very existence. Most pertinent to this study is Leavis’ invitation to his readers to consider the effects that the processes of standardisation would have upon the press, namely one of a general “levelling down”.³⁵⁰ Leavis described how his worst fears seemed already to be taking place by referring to the changes brought about by the owner of a newspaper (Lord Northcliffe) who at that time:

“...broke down the dignified idea that the conductors of newspapers should appeal to the intelligent few. He frankly appealed to the unintelligent many...because they were as the sands of the sea in numbers. He did not aim at making opinion less stable, emotion more superficial. He did this, without knowing he did it, because it increased circulation”.³⁵¹

If the quality of the press were declining in order to satisfy the majority, Leavis feared that the minority would become increasingly removed from those controlling the affairs of the state, and that their work would become increasingly inaccessible to future generations. He cited Richards who argued that “this century is in a cultural trough rather than upon a crest...the situation is likely to get worse before it is better. Once the basic level is reached...a slow climb back may be possible”,³⁵² whilst he himself reflected “but it is a hope that looks very desperate in the face of the downward acceleration... and it does not seem to point to any factor that might be counted upon to reverse the process”.³⁵³ Leavis concluded that the future seemed uncertain and that little room for hope existed amidst the

³⁴⁷ Leavis, Frank: *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, p. 25.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵¹ Fyfe, “Northcliffe: an Intimate Biography”, as in Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³⁵² Richards, as in Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁵³ Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

“standardised civilisation (which) is rapidly enveloping the whole world”.³⁵⁴ However, Leavis’ approach appears to present only opposing options for the future: creativity versus commerce, individuality versus the mass produced, high art versus low art and authenticity versus artificiality; whilst his criticisms of mass production and common culture appear to dismiss and ignore the demands and activities of the audiences for popular culture.

A subsequent important exponent of this anti-populist stance was Theodor Adorno. In 1941, Adorno acknowledged the growing need to study popular music as serious cultural material and understand the nature of the relationship between the popular music industry and society and its associated political implications. For Adorno, the fundamental characteristic of popular music was ‘standardisation’ in which the framework of music is more important than its detail, as opposed to ‘serious music’ in which detail is paramount to its identity. This process of standardisation, he suggested, was “wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society”,³⁵⁵ the framework, he believed, was so rigid that any freedom to deviate from it was severely limited.

Adorno argued that popular music, in this sense, was therefore one means by which concentration and control within culture can manifest themselves. Unhidden, these forces may otherwise provoke resistance and therefore it was essential that popular music retained the illusion of choice and freedom which it had created. The illusion, he argued, was maintained by listeners’ choices between the never-ending entrance of new bands and new records to the music industry through which standardisation is hidden and the political status quo is maintained. Adorno referred to this process as “pseudo-individualisation”,³⁵⁶ and it was this which endowed “cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardisation itself”.³⁵⁷

Adorno suggested that the ‘masses’ are kneaded by the mode of mass production and that the consumers of popular music are unwittingly contributing to its maintenance; popular music, he argued, offered a form of stimulation and distraction from the boredom of the workaday world, and its simplicity feeds their desire for some instant craving for new experience. Yet this fixes popular music consumers into an inescapable cycle, since in order to access these experiences, the income obtained from working is necessary. Adorno concluded that popular culture, and more specifically popular music, had become little more than “social cement”,³⁵⁸ necessary for the maintenance and growth of capitalist society.

In the 1950s, the literary critic, student of popular culture, novelist and then analyst of contemporary politics and society, Raymond Williams, did not mourn the loss of a past culture but instead pioneered a new, more inclusive, perspective on popular culture, and one which was better able to accommodate change. Williams proposed a new way of thinking about the symbolic dimensions of everyday life; he

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁵⁵ Adorno, Theodor: “On Popular Music”, p. 305.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

suggested that instead of a culture which is based upon traditional styles of artistic production and specialist knowledge, i.e. high art, we consider one which incorporates the lived experience of the everyday:

“A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture: that it is always both traditional and creative; that it is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings. We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning – the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or the other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction”.³⁵⁹

Williams proposed that this more inclusive definition of 'culture' both necessitated and reflected a gradual period of social change whereby diversity among any community becomes accepted, and where the cultural preferences of the majority do not overshadow those of the minority. In a subsequent publication, in 1961, Williams argued that this shift towards an expansion of that which is deemed 'cultural material' could be achieved by a process of 'natural growth', and used the evolution of language and sounds accepted and incorporated within 'Received Standard' as an analogy to show that that whilst widening the accepted definition of culture would no doubt be slow and uneven at times, eventually values would change and become increasingly accommodating; Williams referred to this process as 'the long revolution'.³⁶⁰

In 1985, Kerman, a second key exponent of the populist stance, drew further attention to increasing diversity and change in his expressed concerns that musicologists, until that time, had been dealing only with music of the past and that there were no longer any justifiable grounds for musicologists to continue to distinguish the music of the past from that of the present; an argument, which if transposed to the broadsheet press, might to some extent validate a decreased emphasis upon classical music. He proposed that in studying the music of the twentieth century, the scope of musicology should encompass “contemporary musical life ... (including its) ... social use and value”³⁶¹ and operate along more ethnomusicological lines.

In addition to accusing musicologists of taking an overly positivist stance towards their subject, and of failing to address the wider context of music, Kerman also attacked their outdated model for criticism. He argued that “music critics had begun to shirk evaluation, discrimination and the making of value judgements...academic musicologists and analysts had not yet begun to face up to criticism”.³⁶² Kerman further argued that musicologists' previous preoccupation with 'analysis' had produced

³⁵⁹ Williams, Raymond as in McKenzie, N.: *Convictions*, p. 6.

³⁶⁰ Williams, Raymond: *The Long Revolution*, p. 383.

³⁶¹ Kerman, Joseph: *Musicology*, p. 37.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

"relatively little of intellectual interest' because it completely ignored the question of 'artistic value'".³⁶³ It is possible therefore that writers and editors of music criticism in non-academic sources, like broadsheets have attempted to fill this void by providing a rich source of judgements and value statements, as evidenced in the content analysis conducted here; indeed, Kerman's final concern was that unless musicologists adapted their approach to music criticism, someone else would do it for them.

Kerman's views perhaps succeeded in lighting the fuse for change since in 1999 Cook and Everist suggested that his views had indeed destabilised musicology. They claimed that the before and after Kerman paradigm mirrored a divide which had since occurred within the discipline: the 'new' musicologists who see musicology as having come of age in the last decade, and those who see today's "post-formalist, post-positivist, post-everything agenda as a betrayal of the discipline".³⁶⁴ Cook and Everist believed that the vacuum that Kerman created was filled by what came to be called 'new musicology'; this resulted in a dramatic expansion of the musicological agenda in the decade after 1985.³⁶⁵ New musicology, they claimed, encompassed "a conscientious and often self-conscious accommodation between established methodologies and new horizons",³⁶⁶ and became increasingly interdisciplinary. New musicologists, it seemed, abandoned the positivist approach in favour for one which embraced an openness to the multiplicity of possible interpretations.

By the 1990s it seems that in understanding and defining popular 'culture' a wider collection of the cultural meaning systems and practices within a given culture had come to the fore, rather than simply the most elite cultural manifestations. During an interview on BBC Radio 3 in September 1991, Frederic Jameson, a further celebrant of popular culture, argued that high and low art distinctions were almost certainly collapsing and that pop music was coming to be considered as cultural material worthy of serious criticism in what had previously been predominantly high art publications. In his book published the same year, Jameson also suggested that "if the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant (or hegemonic) ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm".³⁶⁷ Like Adorno, he argued that since aesthetic production has become integrated into commodity production, this process now imposes increasingly rigid parameters upon aesthetic innovation and experimentation. Yet Jameson believed that state of affairs represented the "moment of truth"³⁶⁸ for postmodernism, the undoing of the old high-modernist frontier between high culture and mass or commercial culture. The emergence of new kinds of texts implanted with the discourse of capitalism, and a cultural industry and ideology that would be strongly denounced by those such as Leavis were, he suggested, some of several features which characterised postmodernism.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³⁶⁴ Cook, Nicholas and Mark Everist, *Rethinking Music*, Preface, p. viii.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface, p. x.

³⁶⁷ Jameson, *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 19.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

For Jameson postmodernism was characterised by the embrace of new technology and the dominance of new methods of communication information, linguistics and communication technology. He also blamed what he called the “mutation of space - postmodern hyperspace”,³⁶⁹ i.e. the mastering and abolition of space and the reduction of distance between people and cultures, brought about by the global technologisation of recent years. Jameson suggested that examples of this new condition of ‘hyperspace’ include MTV and rock videos since they illustrate how music has spatialised.³⁷⁰ Jameson suggested that postmodernism could also be defined by a popular culture landscape filled with “TV series and Readers Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories”,³⁷¹ the implication being that, whether we like it or not, a certain level of depthlessness, coinciding with “a repudiation of depth models in Philosophy”,³⁷² defined the present time. Furthermore Jameson believed that, in the postmodern condition, our cultural past recedes and becomes difficult to incorporate into everyday life. Jameson argued that postmodernism is best thought of as both a cultural dominant, socioeconomic condition and lived condition, and as one which allows for a pastiche of sub features to coexist. When asked on radio how certain he was that postmodernism, as opposed to late modernism, existed Jameson suggested that, although different cultures and generations are bound to disagree, the shift is noticeable in the form of “a global transformation of the life world”,³⁷³ in terms of its economic, thought and value structures.

Jameson argued that postmodernism is what has occurred as a result of the relative completeness of modernism, except that it takes elements of modernism to new limits. He argues that it is a deep transformation as a result of a shift in production, whereby we are now producing not only material but also cultural goods in a movement beyond capitalism into a society dominated by science and knowledge, that being the global expansion of late capitalism. He affirmed that in his view the semi-autonomy of the cultural domain has been destroyed by “the logic of late capitalism”³⁷⁴ in which every aspect of our social life has become a “cultural” commodity in some shape or form.

Jameson's final claim returns us to Frith and Savage's 1997 article, the starting point for this research. At the time publishing their article, both authors had been eminent long-standing popular music critics, the former predominantly in the broadsheet press (in addition to a prominent academic career) and the latter in the specialist music press, and thus had been writing about popular culture for many years; however, their article expressed the problems and tensions which they had encountered in the course of doing so. Both authors suggested that the 1980s saw the elevation of ‘style’ over knowledge, and that

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁷⁰ Jameson, Fredric on BBC Radio 3 (9 September 1991).

³⁷¹ Jameson, Fredric: *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 2.

³⁷² Jameson, Fredric on BBC Radio 3 (09/09/1991).

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ Jameson, Fredric: *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 46.

many new publications were launched within a context where it mattered little if journalists did not possess any expert musical knowledge, provided they could write something that readers would buy, since the publications themselves had begun to acquire a cultural value of their own. The authors accused newspaper editors of making the assumption that 'low art' coverage is best covered from the perspective of the 'ordinary' listener/reviewer, infused by creative writing, whilst 'experts' are employed to cover 'high' art, including classical music; the result, they suggest, is that popular culture is treated with a particular lack of seriousness by the populists.

Frith and Savage's condemnation is most severe in their accusation that, whilst Fleet Street provided popular culture criticism, its editors frequently do not like popular culture and as such they prevent the development of a serious language in which popular music can be evaluated. The language used within the broadsheet press at that time, they argue, was irrelevant to pop culture producers, pop culture consumers (in its failure to recognise most of the readers' actual experiences), and to those like Frith and Savage who desired an altogether new language to represent popular culture. The authors proposed that this new language should be "derived from anthropology, archetypal psychology, musicology (and have) ... a grasp of pop both as an industrial and aesthetic form".³⁷⁵ Frith and Savage's closing plea was that musicologists assume responsibility for popular culture, since in their view the populists had not delivered criticism of any worth to date and, as a result of their aimless approach, had blocked the route to a more fulfilling and intellectually informed style of popular culture criticism.

³⁷⁵ Frith, Simon and Jon Savage: "Pearls and Swine", p. 17.

Review of a Sample of Broadsheets from March 2009

By turning to a sample of broadsheet newspapers taken from the first week in March 2009, thus reflecting the use of March editions for the main body of this research, and with specific reference to Monday, Saturday and Sunday editions as representatives of both weekend and week day content, it is possible to identify several characteristics which may indicate that many of the changes identified in this research continue within the broadsheet press of the 21st century.

One seemingly distinctive legacy inherited from the 1980s is the proliferation of supplements and themed sections; for example an edition of *The Sunday Times* may contain no less than thirteen differently themed sections and supplements, some in glossy magazine format, including ‘Culture’ in which the majority of music-related material resides³⁷⁶. The provision of supplementary, and often sizeable, entertainment guides containing details of music-related events, is particularly noteworthy, for example *The Times*’ provides a weekly booklet-sized listings supplement titled ‘Playlist’, whilst ‘The Guardian Guide’, a small colour magazine, provides details of performances in a multitude of locations, which are not necessarily London-based, divided into genre-based categories: ‘Rock and pop’ (whose 5 pages might imply genre dominance), ‘Jazz’ (2 pages), ‘Classical and opera’ (2 pages), ‘Clubs’ (3 pages).³⁷⁷ Interestingly *The Independent*’s supplement ‘The Information’ provides listings according to whether the reader is a) ‘Going Out’, covering ‘Classical and Opera’, ‘Jazz, Blues, World and Folk’ and ‘Pop’, or b) ‘Staying In’, comprising ‘Album Reviews’ under the subheadings ‘Pop CDs’ (the use of the plural perhaps anticipating the reader’s preference for this genre), ‘Classical CD’, ‘Folk CD’ and ‘Clubs CD’.³⁷⁸

This expansion, of the once typically only half-page long event listings seen in the early 1980s, into carefully themed and structured guide-books in their own right is not only testament to the increased efficiency of newspaper production technology but also alludes to the broadsheets’, and their contributing critics’, enhanced role as providers of consumer guidance; indeed entertainment listings often include sections with titles such as ‘Critic’s Choice’ (a heading first observed in the database constructed for this study in *The Guardian* in 1989), ‘The week’s essential new releases’, or ‘CD of the Week’, whilst the front page of one such supplement pertains to advise readers of “The hottest downloads”, the best “Must-have reissue”, and of events to “Book now”.³⁷⁹

The provision of multiple supplements also demonstrates the broadsheets’ enhanced status as cultural objects in their own right, a shift further evidenced by their adoption of music-related matter as a means to self-advertise. For example, the promise of a free exclusive Noel Gallagher CD and a

³⁷⁶ *The Sunday Times* (2009) 1/3/09.

³⁷⁷ *The Guardian* (2009) 7/3/09.

³⁷⁸ *The Independent* (2009) 7/3/09, p. 18 and p. 47 respectively.

³⁷⁹ *The Sunday Times* (2009) 1/3/09 “Culture” supplement.

supplement described as “Rock of ages, the greatest rock and roll pictures in a magazine photo special”³⁸⁰ were afforded two full-page advertisements as a means of marketing a forthcoming edition of *The Sunday Times*. Evidence of a strengthened interrelationship between broadsheet press and music industry marketing abounds, however in the small sample considered here perhaps the most affirming is provided in *The Independent* whose leading front page headline in one edition stated “FREE CD - Debut album from new supergroup Mongrel ... A WORLD FIRST INSIDE TODAY”, going on to explain how the group makes history by “distributing its first album for free inside a newspaper”; interestingly one of the group members is quoted explaining ““It is a pleasure to do this with *The Independent*” said McClure. “We are a truly independent band, so it seems a fitting match. We wanted to give the widest possible platform to this music and these songs””.³⁸¹ Whilst the practice of giving away free CDs is not uncommon in 2009, it was certainly seen as a new, if not novel, development towards the end of the period examined here, at least in the case of *Classic CD* in 1990.³⁸²

The ongoing diminished fortunes of the music review is also apparent; whilst reviews are far from extinct they often seem relatively short in length, are presented *en-masse* and are blatantly linked to forthcoming events, album releases, downloads and even artists’ websites.³⁸³ Furthermore, music reviews often reside within arts and culture sections alongside other cultural material, such that opera and soap opera might be deemed appropriate bedfellows. Box office details for events are given at the close of articles where applicable and even direct order routes have become available: “To order any of the albums reviewed, visit timeselects.co.uk or ring 0845 6026328”.³⁸⁴ The role of reviews as sources of consumer guidance is also apparent in the widespread application of rating systems³⁸⁵ acting as quick-glance evaluations which are applied to classical and popular music genres alike and providing an extension of the critic’s freedom to provide value judgements. However such practice, perhaps inherited from the specialist music press of the 1970s³⁸⁶ (although a star rating system was also adopted by Sackville-West et al in their 1955 Record Guide, interestingly to rate the quality of the recording rather than the composition itself)³⁸⁷ might also suggest the redundancy of serious critical content in favour of improved reader convenience and accessibility.

In contrast to the demise of music reviews, the increased editorial predilection for feature-writing reported by interviewees appears to have continued into 2009. Features often occupy double pages, are

³⁸⁰ *The Times* (2009) 2/3/09, p50 and 7/3/09, p. 38.

³⁸¹ *The Independent* (2009) 2/3/09, p. 3.

³⁸² Soames, “Trying out a new tune”, p. 33.

³⁸³ For example *The Times* (2009), 7/3/09, p. 14 encourages the download of DM Stith’s *Thanksgiving Moon* and *Fire of Birds*, and directs the reader to the artists’ website ‘dmstith.com’.

³⁸⁴ *The Times* (2009) 7/3/09, Saturday “Playlist” entertainments guide, pp. 14-15.

³⁸⁵ Examples can be found in *The Guardian* (2009) 2/3/09, “Reviews”, p40; *The Sunday Times*, (2009) 1/3/09, “Culture” pp. 30-31; *The Times* (2009) 7/3/09, Saturday “Playlist” pp. 14-15; *The Independent* (2009) 7/3/09, p. 47.

³⁸⁶ Robert Christgau writes “The Consumer Guide has a long history. I wrote my first batch of letter-graded capsule reviews for *The Village Voice* in July, 1969, and published them regularly till I was hired by Long Island’s *Newsday* in March, 1972” (further details provided in Appendix LLL), as in www.robertchristgau.com/xg/web/cgusers.php. Accessed 02/02/2010.

³⁸⁷ Sackville-West et al, *The Record Guide*, p. 10.

usually accompanied by large colour illustrations and, like reviews, are written in an accessible style and frequently timed to coincide with forthcoming album releases or performances. For example a double page feature concerning Grandmaster Flash, linked to a new album, comprised a series of short question and answer statements, not dissimilar to those which might have been found in *Smash Hits* in the 1980s.³⁸⁸ Broadsheet features also act as a platform for new artists to gain public recognition, as demonstrated by a feature about Pixie Lott, touted as ‘Next year’s cover girl’,³⁸⁹ and for temporarily dormant artists to remain in the public conscience, as seen in an article concerning Shakira’s humanitarian work.³⁹⁰ It is also evident that music-related features have broadened their scope to encompass more general music media-related topics, such as one broadsheet music critic’s audition for the YouTube symphony orchestra (after which Zoë Martlew, a judge on the TV show ‘Maestro’ offers her verdict on the performance),³⁹¹ a new channel for the Muslim MTV generation³⁹² and the Glastonbury Festival.³⁹³ Obituaries, often presented as form of feature writing, have also extended into 2009, as seen in the 724 word-long obituary for Latino musician Joe Cuba,³⁹⁴ and the 851 word obituary for John McGlinn, conductor and orchestrator.³⁹⁵ This ongoing proliferation of features, with their broadened subject matter and accessible style, perhaps illustrates the broadsheets’ ongoing competitiveness with their glossy magazine contemporaries, associated with a ‘gossip’ based approach to writing, and demonstrates their increased involvement in defining, in conjunction with music industry PR departments, that which might be considered popular.

In addition to the relative quantity of pages devoted to the different genres within entertainment listings, as seen above, the ongoing good fortune of rock and pop coverage is implied by its frequent occupation of significant and dominant page space, suggesting that the editorial mindset associated with the latter 1980s endures to some extent. In *The Observer*, for example, the ‘Releases’ section, occupying a full page, is laid out such that ‘CD of the Week’, reviewing a U2 album, achieves prime position at the top of the page, alongside which appear six shorter album reviews under the heading of ‘Pop/World/Jazz’, and beneath which appear three classical music album reviews;³⁹⁶ arguably, such genre positioning would not have been considered or deemed acceptable before the period reviewed here. The range of genre coverage within ‘reviews’ sections also demonstrates that it is not only rock music which has become increasingly commonplace; *The Times*, for example, might present a full-page collage of reviews with genre headings encompassing synth-pop, African music, indie music and early music

³⁸⁸ *The Times* (2009) 7/3/09, “Playlist”, “Grandmaster Flash”, pp. 8-9.

³⁸⁹ *The Sunday Times* (2009) 1/3/09, “Culture”, p. 32-33.

³⁹⁰ *The Sunday Times Magazine* (2009) 1/3/09, Turner, A: “Shakira: Every little thing she does is magic”, pp. 58-63.

³⁹¹ *The Guardian* (2009) 2/3/09, Pilkington, E: “The great big musical mash-up”, p. 19-21.

³⁹² *The Guardian* (2009) 7/3/09, Shenker, J: “Rapping for Allah”, p. 24.

³⁹³ *The Guardian* (2009) 7/3/09, p. 30.

³⁹⁴ *The Times* (2009) 2/3/09, Author unknown: “Joe Cuba”, p. 56.

³⁹⁵ *The Times* (2009) 7/3/09, Author unknown: “John McGlinn”, p. 97.

³⁹⁶ *The Observer* (2009) 1/3/09, p. 18.

alike;³⁹⁷ since its first appearance in the broadsheet press in the 1980s, roots music still receives broadsheet attention, and interestingly can still be allocated to jazz and pop critics.³⁹⁸

The music journalists interviewed here reported two key points concerning the style of writing adopted for broadsheet press music coverage during the period examined, the first of which being an increased avoidance of technical musical terminology in favour of a more accessible language, particularly in the case of classical music writing. Evidence that this practice is still favoured by editors in 2009 abounds; for example a classical concert review by Hilary Finch containing very little technical musical terminology instead exhibits several creative descriptive and evaluative statements, as testament to the authors mastery of written language, e.g. “like a view from on high, a broad panorama of a long emotional journey rather than a close focus on the fever and the fret”.³⁹⁹ Similarly accessible, and perhaps in an attempt to achieve familiarity with the reader, a full-page article concerning Bryn Terfel’s return to Covent Garden in a production of *The Flying Dutchman*, displays scant technical terminology and applies first person narrative “At last a shiver went down my spine” and “In Austria last week I caught up with...”.⁴⁰⁰

The second point reported by interviewees, accompanying the increased inclusion of rock and pop coverage, was the infiltration of a flamboyant style of writing commonly associated with the specialist rock music press. Evidence that this permeation continues into 2009 proliferates; for example a feature regarding the ‘NME Big Gig’, written by Kitty Empire (herself a former *NME* writer), included the phrase “Smith still slaps on the slap like a tranny gone feral”,⁴⁰¹ whilst the author of an opera review reported his disappointment by suggesting that one performer was “like a tired auntie after a hard day at the shops” and that “everybody on stage needs a rocket up their arias”;⁴⁰² it is perhaps difficult to imagine such phrasing being deemed acceptable within the broadsheet press before or even during the 1980s.

³⁹⁷ *The Times* (2009) 7/3/09, p. 14.

³⁹⁸ *The Times* (2009) 2/3/09, Davis, C: “World Music”, “Manu Dibango”, p. 16.

³⁹⁹ *The Times* (2009) 2/3/09, Finch, H: “Concert Halle/ Tortelier, Manchester”, p. 16.

⁴⁰⁰ *The Sunday Times* (2009) 1/3/09, “Culture”, Canning, H: “A muted mariner”, p. 34.

⁴⁰¹ *The Observer* (2009) 1/3/09, “Critics”, “Pop”, Empire, K: “I was Cured 20 years ago”, p. 17.

⁴⁰² *The Times* (2009) 2/3/09, “The Times 2”, Morrison, R: “Opera Carmen”, p. 16.

User's Guide to the Consumer Guide

"The Consumer Guide has a long history. I wrote my first batch of letter-graded capsule reviews for The Village Voice in July, 1969, and published them regularly till I was hired by Long Island's Newsday in March, 1972. A monthly Consumer Guide was compiled from my Newsday work in Creem, which then reprinted the column after I returned to the Voice in August, 1974, which published the Consumer Guide until August, 2006, when I was fired by new owners. Since I was hardly the only reject, this was no shock, and it worked out well for me, because now I have three gigs. My Rock&Roll& essays appear online in The Barnes & Noble Review. I do regular record pieces at NPR's All Things Considered. And Microsoft MSN Music publishes the Consumer Guide monthly.

Originally the Consumer Guide used an A-to-E grading system that I waggishly explained in the first of three decade-spanning books based on my published columns. These weren't like grades in school--there were too many B plus records for anything lower to count as a recommendation. Yet every month I rated plenty of albums B or below. By 1990, however, I'd had it with calibrating the not-so-hot. That was for critics, I reasoned--consumers were just looking for records to buy. So I'd limit myself to what I refer to as "A records," meaning those rated A plus (very rare, three a year is a lot and zero not uncommon, mostly because prolonged enjoyment is so tricky to predict), A (annually there are a dozen or 15 of those), and A minus (in a good year I find 60 or 70). Then there'd be a few "high B plusses" (which I agonize over so long I figure they have something but not quite enough). Only I soon decided there'd be other records I couldn't overlook altogether. At first there were maybe half a dozen of these "Honorable Mentions." But as album production increased tenfold in the '90s, so that twice as many hours of music were recorded annually than there were hours in a year, Honorable Mentions mushroomed. Engaged competence with flashes of inspiration became the essence of our musical condition. I'd changed formats just in time."

Source: www.robertchristgau.com/xg/web/cgusers.php. Accessed 02/02/2010.